All We Have: Performance Photographs and Artist Interviews in the Contemporary

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While writing this dissertation, I watched *The Shining* many times. This wasn't only about the idea that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," though I'm sure I had some moments resembling that. My obsession with the film was, in fact, completely about the end. Trapped in a snowy maze, terrorized by a mutated father who wields an ax and bad intentions, little boy Danny realizes that he must walk backwards in his own footsteps in order to mask his movements and trick his pursuer. In this moment, the only way to safety is to retrace one's own steps.

My situation is surely not anywhere near as dire, but this retracing of steps is the task at hand. Such a concern is about charting a path through the dizzying maze of writing about pictures and words, of putting together a project like the dissertation, but it's also a matter of acknowledging the steps one takes along the way, to know that you walked with purpose and with guidance, to make it to safety.

With that in mind, I first need to thank my excellent committee. Michael Gaudio provided necessary breadth for this project at its very beginning and, in his role as Director of Graduate Studies, expanded much of its research through departmental enthusiasm and support. Cindy Garcia's course on race, diasporas, and performance built an exceptional reading list for many of these themes, and she has helped me understand how photographs move and change across the disciplines.

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I am incredibly grateful for my parents, who enthusiastically supported my pursuit of art history as both a career and a passion, and are equally appreciative of what they learned along the way.

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DEDICATION

For my mom,
my favorite teacher.

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Introduction

In his 1998 catalogue essay for the Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, then-Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture Kurt Varnedoe speculates on the continued significance of Pollock's paintings for artists, scholars, and art critics. MoMA's show was dedicated to understanding Pollock as a breakthrough artist, one who put United States painting on the map in a way that finally rivaled Europe. As the first New York retrospective for Pollock since the one mounted in 1967, just ten years after the artist's death, the museum situated his legacy within the scholarship and art criticism that had been produced about him.[1] Despite this setting, in his catalogue introduction, called "Comet: Jackson Pollock's Life and Work," Varnedoe emphasizes the continued presence of Pollock's production as existing in mostly "unrecorded, nonverbal, subjective responses."[2] Varnedoe offers this as a counter to the copious and prolific amount of writing done about Pollock, which potentially threatens to compete with the paintings themselves. He writes, "There was a time when it seemed very important that these be pictures without words—when the man who made them and many who were drawn to them believed that trying to say what they meant was a pointless betrayal."[3] Here, Varnedoe looks back to the beginnings of Abstract Expressionism,

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[1] At the time of the exhibition, MoMA launched an interactive online portion of the exhibition, still visible here: http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1998/pollock/website100/index.html. That text frames Pollock and the exhibition primarily within art criticism, introducing him to viewers through lines from critics writing about his work and life.

[2] Kirk Varnedoe, "Comet: Jackson Pollock's Life and Work," in *Jackson Pollock*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 77.

[3] Ibid.

indicating that the work at its time of production appeared unsophisticated or even "inarticulate," as he says, thereby resisting words entirely. At the same time, he is drawing on the indescribability of a genius such as Pollock, whose mythic legacy is now surrounded and supported by words, including those of the popular press, art critics, art historians, and well-circulated gossip. In the face of the changes from 1956 (when Pollock died) to 1998, Varnedoe reflects, "By now, though, these are pictures amply wrapped in words: the many stories have themselves become a story, and cocoon the work so densely that a full-time devotee of Pollock studies might thrive without ever escaping their fabric."[4] Varnedoe does not conclude that such words can overtake pictures—he closes his essay by stating that "no matter how daunting the store of verbiage on art, there is always…a great deal (sometimes the core) left over, and only learnable first hand"[5]—but his concern about the possibility of words eclipsing pictures points to a tension between the artwork and what is said about it. "Art is rendered speechless according to Varnadoe [sic]," writes Catherine Soussloff in her own essay about Pollock and the MoMA exhibition.[6] Artworks may be wrapped up in words, then, but do not speak themselves—or perhaps cannot speak, because they communicate in a way that goes entirely beyond formations and understanding of speech.

I begin with Pollock, and with Varnedoe's concern about the "cocoon" which surrounds him, because the view Varnedoe shares points out the challenges of an object or even an artist being made to speak. Throughout their history, Pollock's

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Catherine M. Soussloff, "Jackson Pollock's Post-Ritual Performance: Memories Arrested in Space," *TDR* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 64.

works have been categorized as beyond words even as they have inspired thousands of books, articles, lectures, websites, and so on. Varnedoe reveals the tension in the idea that even if the works themselves cannot speak, the things (and people) that surround them can. Viewers, art historians, and art critics are among those who can and do speak for and about artworks, bringing layers of material to their interpretations, just as Varnedoe both resists the mass appeal of Pollock and necessarily draws on it. To insist that an artwork is "only learnable first hand"—through some kind of presence—is what is at stake for me here, as I consider the ways in which what Varnedoe might consider "second-hand" pictures and words are tools for writing art history about the present and recent past.

The problem that Varnedoe's essay struggles with in a case study such as Pollock—that there is some truth at the core of the artwork that remains constant, even when the work and the artist may be so amply wrapped in words, and furthermore that that truth is only accessible through some kind of first-hand knowledge—is emblematic of all contemporary art history. Motored by globalization and ever-expanding technology, art historians regularly write about artworks they have never seen and artists to whom they might not have access, even in cases where those artists or artworks are contemporary to a scholar. There are many tools for doing so: photographic and filmic documentation of events, performances, installations, exhibitions, etc.; artist interviews, both published and personal; artists' own writings and curatorial practices; studio, event, or other ephemera that may be production- or advertising-related; art criticism; archives organized under the auspices of certain time periods, practices, or geographies; the

traditional gatekeepers of art history, including other scholars, gallerists, and museums; the massive web of the Internet itself, which provides not only formal and informal information on any given thing but also the perception (and, indeed, not always the reality) of a flexible and democratizing network. Here, I will focus on the first two tools: photographic documentation (and more specifically, performance photographs—a choice I will explain in the writing that follows) and artist interviews. I choose these because contemporary art history relies heavily on both tools as offering historical evidence. The two also share some attributes as sources: they are simultaneously of the moment and out of time, fragmentary while also appearing to be encompassing, definitive in their possibility of making meaning despite being highly mediated.

While photographs and interviews act within a constellation of evidence, I argue that there is something particular about their use in contemporary art history. One aspect of this is that they trouble clear distinctions between primary and secondary sources, in that their production and circulation makes them contemporary to multiple historical moments. Furthermore, relying on performance photographs and artist interviews privileges the artist as the site of discourse, either through the artist's own viewable body or own words. This particular type of access is almost entirely not a luxury currently available to our colleagues who study art production of previous centuries, and thus it necessarily fundamentally shapes how we currently write history about the present and recent past. I understand our contemporary use of performance photographs and artist interviews to be a matter of building stories upon stories; thus, I examine both tools through a series of case

studies (including one about Pollock's myth as perpetuated through his own words and those of his wife, Lee Krasner). My goal is to interrogate what might be lost and gained in using photographs and interviews as historical evidence, and therefore what looking at or reading these tools responsibly might entail. To do so, I begin with introducing words and pictures in the contemporary most broadly, before providing literature reviews related to both interviews and photographs more specifically. I then examine these tools through the framework of what I call "networked witnessing," proposing how we could and should use photographs and interviews within contemporary art history. With this framework established, I turn to my case studies—first performance photographs, then artist interviews—in order to offer examples of carrying out my recommendations. While my case studies reveal the variety of conclusions one might productively draw from understanding historical evidence through networked witnessing, I ultimately reveal the ways in which photographs and interviews require a type of inter-viewing—of looking again, from various perspectives, through many layers of mediation, for what might be unfamiliar—that can change our perceptions of our own scholarly responsibility.

Words and Pictures

My research in performance photographs and artist interviews began with a seemingly very straightforward question: when I look at a photograph or read an interview as a source, what does it reveal and what does it hold back? Put another way: in considering these particular formats as pieces of historical evidence, what is lost and what is gained? When I look at a photograph of a performance—say, Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*—what can I learn about the artwork? And what relevant pieces of

information am I missing? In reading an interview with an artist—for example, Benjamin Buchloh talking with Andy Warhol—what do I now know that I did not know before? What do I now wish I knew? These questions are fundamental to the doing of contemporary art history, not only because they imply the sheer number and variety of sources that I can access but also because the presence of the artist (either as a body in the photograph or as their own words in the interview) in these sources is what lends them legitimacy. Thinking about what is lost and what is gained emphasizes a concern for what can actually be "historical" evidence in the contemporary, and by what methods we could work to interpret or analyze that evidence. Historicizing the present and recent past is obviously methodologically complex, since interpretation is created alongside the artist and the artwork itself. Yet in doing contemporary art history, whatever our individual methodological choices may be, we consistently and collectively rely on photographic documentation and artist interviews, even as we continually debate the role of the "document" in the discipline.

My observation is supported by the overwhelming number of titles appearing in the last 20 years that concern themselves with the document specifically in relationship to the contemporary, including but not limited to: Gavin Butt's article "Happenings in History, or, the Epistemology of the Memoir;" Lisa Saltzman's book *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*; Margaret Olin's book *Touching Photographs*; Amelia Jones' article "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation" and book *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*; Rebecca

Schneider's article "Solo, Solo, Solo" and book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*; Jane Blocker's books *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* and *Becoming Past: History in Contemporary Art*; Christine Ross' book *The Past is Present, It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art*; *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art History*, an anthology that includes writings by Jones, Blocker, and Schneider as well as Adrian Heathfield, Boris Groys, and Guillermo Gómez-Peña; Adrian's Heathfield's anthology *Live: Art and Performance*, which includes essays by both artists and scholars; the exhibition *Haunted: Contemporary Photography, Video, and Performance* and its accompanying catalogue; *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, which includes texts by Mieke Bal, Mary Kelley, and Marianne Hirsch; and the Whitechapel Gallery's multi-volume series entitled *Documents of Contemporary Art*. The list could go on, though I have chosen here many of the texts that have shaped my own thinking and appear in my writing. Within these texts as well as others, photographs are treated as reliable evidence, even if many of the authors—including Jones, Schneider, Blocker, and Olin—equally acknowledge the tenuous relationship such evidence might hold with truth.

Many of the titles I have listed above are specifically focused on performance and photography (though references to interviews often appear in their text and footnotes), but the prevalence of the artist interview is similarly visible. Artist interviews regularly appear in artist monographs and major exhibition catalogues, but have expanded beyond that to stand-alone formats. Art critic and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist launched his *Interview Project* in 1996, which includes conversations

with over 60 contemporary artists and thinkers, portions of which have appeared in *Artforum* as well as in his books *Interviews Volume 1* and *Volume 2*. Obrist also launched *The Conversation Series*, a 28-book series, with each book including only a lengthy interview with one artist without any other supporting material. In 2015, *Art Journal* dramatically increased the "Conversations" content on their website, while interviews appear as a typical form of art criticism on *Hyperallergic*, a website dedicated to writings about art and other cultural events. *Artforum* and *Art in America* have long published interviews with artists since their founding in 1962 and 1913, respectively, even as other prominent journals—including *October*—have mostly (though not entirely) stayed away from the format. And of course, there is *Interview* magazine, whose famous founder Andy Warhol appears in a case study here as well. *Interview* began in 1969 with the intention of presenting unedited and often more personal conversations between leading art world figures, and the repercussions of such an approach are visible in the other examples I have listed. The trend of interview-as-criticism has grown out of a number of institutions' long-term commitment to collecting artists' voices, such as the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art (which has various offices across the country), UCLA's Oral History Research Center, the Museum of Modern Art Artist Oral History Initiative, the Video Data Bank in Chicago, the Hatch-Billops Collection in New York (which focuses on interviews with black artists), the Hubell Trading Post in Arizona (which focuses on interviews with Indian-American artists), and the Chicago Historical Society in partnership with the Art Institute of Chicago. Such massive acts of collection seem at least in part made more urgent by the increasing critical attention on identity as

well as the anticipated loss of pioneering artists from the 1960s and '70s, who are growing older and passing away.

My case studies focus on examples in which performance photographs and artist interviews are expressly used to write history about the present and recent past. The core (to use Varnedoe's word for what he believes is "sometimes leftover" in the doing of art history) of each case study is a concern with presence and absence, both in relationship to the artist's own body and the artist's own words. To understand presence in the contemporary, I use the definition proposed by Amelia Jones in her reflection on the recent "obsession" (in her words) with "live art, its histories, and its documentation and re-enactments."[7] She argues that this obsession is a desire for presence, even if that desire becomes misplaced or misrecognized through the assumption that presence "promises a transparency to an observer of what 'is' at the very moment at which it takes place."[8] The myth of such a transparency, as Jones points out, is that no moment can ever be entirely transparent, or in other words, unmediated. While mediation might not be so apparent in live performance (even though such an event is mediated by our bodies, minds, and settings, to name just a few possibilities), it becomes painfully obvious in documentation, since the photograph or the interview offers access to the artist even as the two mediums assert their after-the-fact status. The desire for presence does not just privilege *our* bodies and experiences; it also privileges the artist as the primary site of discourse in the contemporary. Thus, a clearer vision of how

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[7] Amelia Jones, "'The Artist Is Present': Artistic Re-Enactments and the Impossibility of Presence," *TDR (1988-)* 55, no. 1 (April 1, 2011): 17.
[8] Ibid., 18.

photographs and interviews have developed within the art historical field helps us to better understand how our use of words and pictures as historical evidence is deeply connected to such desire for presence.

Words

In her article "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," Amelia Jones directly addresses the conundrum of writing about performances she has never seen, and using photographs to do so—a project that I engage in here as well. Her conclusion is defensive if also completely necessary: of course one can write about performances one has never seen, because the notion that first-hand experience or immediacy would provide completeness or truth is no longer an acceptable belief in the contemporary. Instead, we believe that many layers of mediation come with and impact any experience, and we recognize that the body in performance purposefully relies on contingency as a mode of representation and meaning.[9] Jones' view is shaped by her own practice of writing with (or without) performance photographs and artists' words. She shares that she has been criticized for not getting to know the artists she writes about, with the presumption that the artists' words would substitute for the knowledge that Jones lacks, specifically, the knowledge gained by seeing the live performance. Jones explains the complications of such a presumption:

> At least for me personally I find it impossible, once I get to know someone, to have any sense of clarity about her or his work historically speaking (that is, as it may have come to mean in its original and subsequent contexts). Once I know the artist well, I can write about her or his work in (I hope) revealing ways, but ones that

[9] Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 17.

> are (perhaps usefully, perhaps not) laden with personal feelings and conflicts involving the artist as a friend (or not, as the case may be). Furthermore, as noted, such relationships—especially if they are not positive—increase the logistical difficulties of writing and publishing on the work.[10]

Jones' acknowledgement of her own (potentially useful, potentially not) subjectivity points to an often-opaque process in art historical writing: the logistics of obtaining information. The personal relations that go into such work are often relegated to a footnote (for example, "Personal correspondence with the author") if not written out of history all together. But published artist interviews can begin to make visible this process of exchange, not because the interviewer and interviewee are always close friends, but because the interviews themselves propose and circulate ideas of what it *could* or *should* be like to talk to artists about their work.

Yet even given the extensive proliferation of artist interviews in our moment, as I pointed to earlier, they lack a methodological foundation within the discipline of art history. Interviews have a lengthy history of use in many fields within the social sciences, including linguistics and anthropology/ethnography, as well as education and curriculum instruction, journalism, communication and media studies, and psychology. Logically, these fields have developed sets of best practices around interview techniques and assessment, including outlines for case studies, coding procedures to explicate the text, and methodologies of approach and analysis. But most foundational texts about how and why to do interviews as part of a research or writing practice originate outside of the humanities, and certainly outside of art history.

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[10] Ibid., 11–12.

The literature on interviews can, for the most part, be split into three genres: therapeutic interviews, journalistic interviews, and interviewing as research. I will not discuss therapeutic interviews here, as that body of literature is primarily housed in the field of psychology (though I will say that "talk therapy" shares a certain concern with witnessing, which I will discuss, in that both aim to restore the well-being of an individual through the mutual acknowledgement—in the form of speaking for the patient, listening for the therapist—of trauma). Within journalism, interviews began to appear in the middle of the 19th century, with the original credit given to Horace Greely as the editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, whose interview with Brigham Young was published in 1859.[11] It was a fairly controversial practice at first, though quickly became popular, including with art critics in the later 19th century (as Sarah Burns references in her book *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, which I will discuss further in my second chapter). Journalistic interviews can be a form of research for a larger story or appear in Q&A format, where they are typically designed to reach a specific audience within a limited amount of space. Journalism differs from therapeutic and research practices, however, in two respects: journalists have a right to protect who they interview as a source and they also need not tell the interviewee up front exactly how their words will be edited or analyzed.[12]

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[11] See: Christopher Silvester, ed., *The Penguin Book of Interviews: An Anthology from 1859 to the Present Day* (London: Penguin Press, 1993).
[12] For further discussion on the differences between interviews within journalism and within the social sciences, see: Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 284.

Interviewing as a form of scholarly research is a relatively young topic, with serious scholarly consideration beginning in the early 1980s, even though interviews appear in research studies beginning in the early 20th century. Interviewing as research is concerned with best practices to the extent that ethical positions and foundations of knowledge shape methodological choices, which ultimately impact study results. Early texts within the social sciences, including James Spradley's 1979 book *The Ethnographic Interview* and Elliot Mishler's 1986 book *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, introduced the roles that interviews could play in quantitative research. These eventually led to more comprehensive writing on researching with interviews, including Nigel Fielding's *Interviewing*, publishing in 2003, and Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein's 2002 *Handbook of Interview Research*, both of which more firmly situate interview research as a qualitative method within academic fields such as sociology and anthropology. Currently, Steiner Kvale and Svend Brinkmann's 2009 book *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* is a primary text for conceiving of the craft of interview research as well as its accompanying epistemological and ethical issues. The authors draw on a unique set of texts that incorporate philosophy, writing and literature studies, sociology, and psychology, including authors such as philosopher John Dewey, education researcher Elliot Eisner, and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Kvale and Brinkmann's goal is to elucidate the ways in which we live in an "interview society," one in which "production of the self has come into focus and the interview serves as a social technique for the public construction of the self." The first half of their study considers the ethics of

interviewing, in which (most significant to my inquiry) they pose interviewing as a social practice of the postmodern age. In particular, they focus on Jean-François Lyotard's diagnosis of postmodernism as rooted in a "disbelief in universal systems of thought."[13] Lyotard discusses this in his 1984 book *The Postmodern Condition* as part of his insistence that knowledge has become a commodity in and of itself.[14] Kvale and Brinkmann use Lyotard's views to highlight the ways in which an interview is a "production site of knowledge," thereby emphasizing differences over universality, since an interview society relies on the narratives humans strive to build in conversation with one another.[15]

In the second half of their text, Kvale and Brinkmann break down interview research into seven stages: thematizing an interview study, designing an interview, conducting an interview, transcribing an interview, analyzing an interview, verifying that analysis, and reporting results.[16] These stages are geared toward qualitative research studies, in which interviews with participants shape final conclusions and recommendations, but they are transferrable to the work of art history. Art historians and critics think about why they might do an interview, map out their questions, conduct, transcribe, and then typically share their "results" in one form or another, with conclusions and recommendations clearly correlating to interpretations. What Kvale and Brinkmann's comprehensive text provides that is often lacking in art history methods is a thorough examination of the choices an

[13] Ibid., 52.
[14] See: Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984).
[15] Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 53.
[16] Ibid., 97.

interviewer (as the person who becomes responsible for interpretation and analysis) might make "based on knowledge of the topic of the study, the methodological options available, their ethical implications, and anticipated consequences of the choices for the entire interview project."[17]

Kvale and Brinkmann acknowledge that the publication of interviews can be misleading; they state, "Articles in social science journals often give a rather formalistic picture of the research process as following a clear methodological procedure. Editorial requirements promote a distorted rationalized picture of scientific research as a logical, linear process—which is far from the continually changing actual research process with its surprises, design changes, and reformulations of concept and hypotheses."[18] They contest this false tidiness by tending to the many choices, challenges, and opportunities that arise in an interview setting, focusing on the emotional dynamics between interviewer and interviewee. Such a perspective helps drive their argument: researching with interviews is fundamentally about "attempt[ing] to understand the world from the subjects' points of view," and therefore, an interview is—at its most essential—a conversation.[19] Genres of conversation may vary in place and purpose, but are always guided by rules and techniques that are, according to Kvale and Brinkmann, established through interdependent forces, including human interaction, setting, and topic.[20] The idea of interdependence is certainly translatable to the work of art

[17] Ibid., 99–100.
[18] Ibid., 100.
[19] Ibid., 1.
[20] Ibid., 2.

history, and is the "best practice" of interview research that I pull into my assessment of interviews' potential value.

While art history must borrow from other fields to gain better perspective on interviewing practices more specifically, the discipline could join such methods with foundational understandings about the power of words. Arguably, no other author in the humanities appears more in a discussion of how words function and make meaning than J. L. Austin. The 1962 book *How to Do Things with Words* gathers together his extensive lectures on words as performative utterances, and it continues to elicit reflections and citations from contemporary art historians.[21] Austin's argument turns around the idea that "to *say* something is to *do* something," rather than to simply state something.[22] His primary examples are that of a marriage ceremony or a boat christening, in which speaking words is not a matter of stating fact but of creating reality. Such performative language presents us with the promises words are capable of making, in that a promise can either be present and implemented or not, and therefore void. What we can take from Austin into a discussion of interviews is his proposal that "[i]t has come to be commonly held that many utterances that look like statements are either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart straightforward information about the facts."[23] Austin is concerned with how this phenomenon of less-than-straightforward language arose philosophically and grammatically, but for my purposes, its

[21] It is worth noting here that *How to Do Things with Words* is itself composed out of abbreviated notes, personal writings, and tape recordings—mediums that are themselves complicated by editing and interpretation.
[22] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1962), 12.
[23] Ibid., 2.

significance is in making clear the possibilities of manipulating the words we speak, and the many reasons for that manipulation. Words, according to Austin, are not inherent truth-tellers but instead, their use tells much more about us. Indeed, Austin sets aside truth as a concern within his examples—"None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it."—to focus on intention and operation, for it is in intention and not truth that words can become controversial, or even dangerous.[24] Austin points to this in saying, "The utterance of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even *the*, leading incident in the performance of the act…the performance of which is also the object of the utterance, but it is far from being usually, even if it is ever, the *sole* thing necessary if the act is to be deemed to have been performed."[25] The danger here is that even when words do work (such as in the act of saying "I do" at the altar), they are never working by themselves; they also rely on circumstances and context (for example, for saying "I do" to work legally or potentially even emotionally, I need to not have another current marital partner). In this way, words do not work without supplemental information. Austin thinks through this problem in terms of presence and absence, in that performative utterances cannot in fact be false, in the sense that they cannot be incorrect, but that they can be void if the appropriate circumstances and context—the supplements to the words—are absent.

In his essay "That Dangerous Supplement," which appeared 15 years after the publication of Austin's lectures, Jacques Derrida puts the supplement into focus by addressing the ways in which it eclipses its object. He bases his interrogation on

[24] Ibid., 6.
[25] Ibid., 8.

philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued throughout his writings about the secondary, or supplemental, role of writing to spoken language. Rousseau was not worried about the practicalities and subsequent ideologies of transcription, but rather more philosophically concerned with the feeling of presentness.[26] In a presumably secondary role, the supplement is actually dangerous to speech because writing destroys the notion of presence, compromising the integrity of the subject in relationship to speech. Derrida, on the other hand, seeks to show how writing is an addition to speech, but is also essential to the constitution of speech itself. As he states, "To write is indeed the only way of keeping or recapturing speech since speech denies itself as it gives itself."[27] This evokes a more performative aspect of speech,[28] which is temporally produced and experienced. It also touches on how the production of writing both denies the present moment while also creating a space in which that moment is valued. Though his argument is rooted in spoken words, Derrida's essay also addresses other circulated forms of supplemental communication, including arguing that art is a supplement to nature.

As Derrida points out, the potential for the supplement to become dangerous lies in the "eclipse," implying that by gaining something we may necessarily lose something else. Jones discusses the dangerous supplements that performance creates—"the body 'itself,' the spoken narrative, the video and other visuals within

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[26] See: *L'oeil vivant, essai: Corneille, Racine, Rousseau, Stendhal*, published by Jean Starobinski in Paris in 1961.
[27] Jacques Derrida, "...That Dangerous Supplement...," in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 142.
[28] Here I do not mean "performative" in the J. L. Austin sense, as to words that are able to perform certain realities, but rather "performative" as reliant on person-to-person exchange.

the piece, the video, film, photograph, and text documenting it for posterity"—as both formulating and replacing any sense of presence that the performance event itself might provide.[29] This is a matter of reproduction, in that it is "an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer."[30] She concludes, "[r]ather than confirming the ontological coherence of the body-as-presence, body art depends on documentation, confirming—even exacerbating—the supplementarity of the body itself."[31] How quickly a concern for *words* becomes a concern for the body, a transition that indicates how we understand speech as primary and authentic, and thus as much from the body as performance is. Presence can be connected to artist interviews as a matter of writing out an exchange. Subsequent publication both competes with the exchange (evident in the mis-translations and –transcriptions that happen around interviews) and creates an opportunity for valuing it (evident in the publication and circulation of artists' words to the ends of preservation). In many cases, it is the words—not the moment—which we can hold on to as substitutions for the many layers of exchange happening in an interview.

The purposes of the artist interview are several-fold and often overlapping. First, scholars interview artists to sort out what we might call the logistical: Where was this shown and when? Who owned it then? Where were you living at the time? Artists can and do misremember such facts or details, but scholars still ask. Then there is the artist interview that seems to be more about chatting, or even gossiping.

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[29] Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," 14.
[30] Ibid. Originally from Derrida's text.
[31] Ibid., 15.

This style points to an element of insider networking that pervades practice, where an artist may choose an interviewer based on an already-established relationship, such as Ed Kienholz choosing Willoughby Sharp to interview him for the UCLA archives.[32] This happens not just in archival situations but also in art criticism, where friends chatting about some "stuff," as Andy Warhol calls the art historical content of an interview with Benjamin Buchloh, is subsequently published and circulated in the realm of the "critical." A third purpose brings together some of the concerns of the first two in the idea of validation. Both interviewers and interviewees enter into these conversations to confirm such logistics but also to validate relationships and experiences. Here we may think back to the criticism of Jones that I began with, where interviewing artists would have validated the experiences of the artists as well as Jones' own credentials. Within this mode, the discipline of art history continues to prioritize interviews as primary sources, or first-hand accounts of the truth of an artist's feeling or thinking. Interviews function somewhat like eyewitness testimony, in that truth is housed in the body that can speak its own words. Furthermore, because of legal and journalistic precedents, we expect interviews of any kind, including those with artists, to offer us access to the unedited and original artist.

For this reason, while I am certainly concerned with the actual work of producing the interview (was it done in person, over the phone, or through writing, for example), my examples focus on those interviews that began orally and are now in printed, published formats. I have two reasons for choosing this focus: 1) the

[32] As related to the author by Jane Blocker.

artist interview in the format of the Q&A carries the look of authenticity, in that it masquerades as unedited, as if it diligently transcribes a real-time conversation; and 2) an ability to be published and thus circulated is what provides opportunities for art historians to use these exchanges to write history. In this type of interview, an exchange that is necessarily embodied in its practice primarily becomes one of the written word, now accessible through time and space rather than confined to one moment or potentially, in some cases, particular bodies, even as it still centers the artist as the site of discourse.

Pictures

The thoughts and presumptions that continue to shape the contemporary ways in which we see photographs were forged in partnership with the circumstances of the writers of photo history and theory, which by most accounts begins in earnest in Europe and North America in the 1920s and '30s.[33] In taking Walter Benjamin's proposal that it is interrogation—not introduction—that brings a new medium into maturity, we may see the first half of the 20th century as this time of growth, during which we developed a fuller understanding of the ways in which a photograph shows us what the camera sees. The emphasis on social and technological change during the earlier 20th century correlates to the heralding of photography as a literally new, and thereby modern, way of seeing. At this time, many practitioners of photography and writers of its history considered technical

[33] Both Liz Wells and Alan Trachtenberg provide excellent anthologies of photo history and theory, which gather essays in a way that is attentive to both the artistic and sociocultural circumstances of writers. See: Liz Wells, ed., *The Photography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003); Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980).

reproduction to be the unique factor of the medium, labeling this ability as its truly revolutionary contribution.[34] In this case, reproduction is the notion that photographs—unlike instances of production in other media—may be widely circulated and thus widely seen, drastically altering their audience opportunities.[35] In his 1932 essay "A New Instrument of Vision," Lázló Moholy-Nagy begins by stating, "In photography we possess an extraordinary instrument for reproduction."[36] Moholy-Nagy makes a case for the newness of photography, by which he means its ability to reproduce "what has been," as necessary for seeing the modern world. The ability to see differently that he is so encouraged by is intimately tied to the concept of reproduction, of being able to see not just once, but *over again*.

Moholy-Nagy's theories join those of Walter Benjamin, whose prolific essay of 1936 entitled "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" grapples with the perceived significance of mechanical reproduction to art and the world. In his interest in pinning down what exactly is so different between previous image production and the abilities of photography, Benjamin is primarily concerned with an artwork's aura, by which he means the presence of the original or the authentic.[37] According to him, photography threatens the aura of the artwork through its ability

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[34] Both Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and Walter Benjamin, as early writers on photography, located its uniqueness in reproducibility of the image while initial practitioners—including Bertillon, Bayard, and Muybridge—also explored repetition as a particularly useful aspect of photography.
[35] This idea is perhaps most closely associated with Walter Benjamin's writing on "aura" in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936).
[36] Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, "A New Instrument of Vision," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 92.
[37] Walter Benjamin, "Extracts from The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 43–44.

of technical (rather than manual) reproduction. His reasoning is twofold: first, that technical reproduction happens more independently from an original than manual reproduction and therefore allows for images that do not occur naturally, and second, that technical reproduction allows for the copy to appear in situations in which the original would not.[38] Even in this early moment of photography theorizing, Benjamin was already concerned with how such a unique yet reproducible image might appear to a viewer: "Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former."[39] Here, Benjamin proposes a central tenet of reproduction: the nature of reproducibility is inherently transitory, and therefore fully acknowledges the notion that reproduced photographs solicit unpredictable audiences. Attention to *how* they appear to these audiences, and their subsequent impressions, becomes a question of repetition and substitution.

While authors of the later 20th century, including Hubert Damisch, John Tagg, and Allan Sekula, consider photography in terms of the documentary, linking its use to the needs of the state and capitalism, their work continues to rely on the mechanical practices of photography as the theoretical foundation of the field, in which the production of photographs in and of itself is meaningless without taking into consideration their ability to be exchanged for various purposes. Their work also coincides with major movements around feminism, critical race theory, and queer theory, all of which work to better understand subjectivity and identity in

[38] Ibid., 43.
[39] Ibid., 45.

relationship to representation of the self and others in photography as well as other media. Authors such as Jan Avgikos (who specifically considers Cindy Sherman's artwork), Pierre Bourdieu, bell hooks, Stuart Hall, and Angela Kelly moved discussions of a photograph's value firmly into a sociocultural and even domestic realm by simultaneously inheriting and complicating our psychoanalytical relationships to images and memory. Their goal was often to understand how personal photography can become just as powerful as its more officially regimented practices, such as surveillance, categorization, profiling, documentation, and record-keeping.

Lisa Saltzman picks up the threads of the personal concerns and habits of photography in her book 2006 book *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, which proposes repetition and substitution as a method of collective memory. Saltzman considers the ways in which certain types of monuments "bear witness," by which she more precisely means that they create public memory through the repetition of cultural association:

> Central and repeated elements in cultural practices of memory that range from vigils and shrines to funerary monuments and family albums, the candles and photographs stand as much for these rituals and sites of remembrance as they do for the individual young men they seek to honor and remember. Attributes that reinforce the memorial testimony each subject offers, the candles and photographs are also a reminder of a set of visual strategies, a set of visual technologies, with which their testimony is registered and through which their testimony will be witnessed.[40]

Saltzman is concerned with the idea that the meanings of things like candles and photographs are know-able because of repetition; we now recognize that candles

[40] Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 36.

and photographs not only represent but also in fact mean loss. In looking closely at examples of public monuments and remembrances, both government-sponsored and community-driven, Saltzman draws our attention to visual strategies and the creation of objects—"[R]ecorded not by a history but by an artist and destined not for an archive but for an audience"—that are intentionally public in their function.[41] Photographs are among those material objects that Saltzman has stand in not just for memories, but experiences or even people themselves. Such a substitution changes a sense of what kind of witnessing may be possible through memory, since in the case of photographs, witnessing does not happen between two subjects but rather between one subject and one object that now represents or embodies a subject.

We can relate a formation of substitution through visual strategies like Saltzman's to Roland Barthes notion of "punctum." Barthes undoubtedly touches almost all iterations of photographic writing produced in the West since the 1980s, with his distinct mix of the deeply personal and the heady theoretical. Barthes' concept of punctum is introduced in his seminal text *Camera Lucida*, which aims to eulogize Barthes' recently deceased mother through an almost-meditative examination of the essence and effects of photography. About the punctum, Barthes writes, "it is the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[42] Barthes' most evocative example of the concept of punctum

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 26.

within a photograph is performed with a family portrait photograph by James VanDerZee, taken in 1926 (Figure 1). Barthes writes,

> Reading Van der Zee's photograph, I thought I had discerned what moved me: the strapped pumps of the black woman in her Sunday best; but this photograph has *worked* within me, and later on I realized that the real *punctum* was the necklace she was wearing; for (no doubt) it was this same necklace (a slender ribbon of braided gold) which I had seen worn by someone in my own family, and which, once she died, remained shut up in a family box of old jewelry (this sister of my father never married, lived with her mother as an old maid, and I had always been saddened whenever I thought of her dreary life). I had just realized that however immediate and incisive it was, the *punctum* could accommodate a certain latency (but never any scrutiny).[43]

Barthes is pricked, or bruised, here by a photograph that becomes deeply associated with his own memory as well as his own sadness. The necklace worn by the woman in VanDerZee's family portrait becomes that of Barthes' aunt, reminding him through its presence of the necklace's physical absence (as it is "shut up in a family box of old jewelry") as well as the absence of his aunt and the absence of happiness within her life. Discovering the punctum is not necessarily immediate, as Barthes notes in the last sentence, but instead can be a dormant element, or even not something that initially catches the viewer's eye; furthermore, the punctum may be or become so personal that it does not hold up careful and logical examination. This is not unlike Saltzman's visual strategies of substitution, where reading a certain object in a certain context endows that object with meaning that is both personal and memorial.

But such desire for substitution can be dangerous, or, when Barthes initially defines the punctum as "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant

[43] Ibid., 53.

to me)," it may be the "accident" that requires more of our attention that then "prick."[44] In order to elucidate the potential dangerous of substitution that arise when we begin to make associations based on what we know and desire, in her book *Touching Photographs* Margaret Olin walks her readers through Barthes seeing the set of pearls in VanDerZee's photograph as "this same necklace (a slender ribbon of braided gold) which I had seen worn by someone in my own family," which allows the photograph to touch Barthes by evoking a personal memory.[45] However, the sitter in VanDerZee's photograph is not wearing the necklace Barthes sees; in fact, she wears a string of pearls. As Olin points out, this confusion persists without comment from most readers of *Camera Lucida*, perhaps because Barthes' writing and VanDerZee's photograph fall relatively far apart from each other in the book, and for this reason, readers are unlikely to actually do their own looking. Barthes' mistaken punctum is not just that to Olin, however, who notes that "the detail he thought he needed to search for was indeed important, if absent."[46]

Margaret Olin's proposal of the "performative index" helps to explain why photographs are so often treated as substitutions, both legitimate and mistaken. For Olin, the performative index "performs a relation that may not depend on resemblance," creating an exchange in which a viewer builds a connection between a photograph and something else not because of what the photograph depicts but because of how the photograph accesses more personal memories, feelings, or desires.[47] For Olin, this access is the ultimate power of the photograph, in that "this

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[44] Ibid., 27.
[45] Margaret Rose Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 58.
[46] Ibid., 60.
[47] Ibid., 6.

relational sense gives a photograph its power to stand in for a person."[48] Olin considers different types of photographs and the (close) looking they solicit, including a teenager's selfie "as a witness to her devotion as well as a surrogate companion to her boyfriend."[49] In an example like this one, "photography merges the language of witnessing with the language of the index" by positioning photographs as both recorders of and substitutes for people, places, and events.[50] I would add to Olin's analysis that this performative index is what allows a photograph to stand in for not just a person but also an event. By creating an affective exchange that does not depend on exact resemblance but rather on perceived connections, photographs of performances become effective substitutions for the performances themselves, even when we know that their resemblance to an event is not and cannot be "exact." A substitution like this is reinforced by reproduction, because it is the technology of reproduction that creates the circumstances for circulation of a particular image.

To understand the work of substitution, Olin expands on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus" and his own take on photo history. As previously mentioned, Bourdieu did work during the 1960s to understand the patterns and desires of personal photography. In his research, he found that—as a result of the rise of accessible photographic technology—most (now culturally amateur) photographers focused on two things: family and events. Thus, the photograph came to be a recognizable symbol for important family or community moments, resulting

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 16.
[50] Ibid., 15–16.

in domestic placement of photographs at the center of the home or in obvious community locales.[51] We see the echoes of this not only in Olin, but also in Saltzman, where prominent placement of images within mutually agreed upon community gathering spaces is what provides images with such substitutional power. Bourdieu's findings about personal photography practice rely in large part on his understanding of habitus, in which individuals engage in certain beliefs or behaviors primarily out of socialized habit, rather than perhaps fully recognizing or understanding the origins of such attitudes or actions.[52] Through examples such as photo ops, snapshots, and saving photographs as mementos, Olin argues that certain actions become habitual and recognizable: "Actions surrounding photographs include not only taking them but also posing for them, or even just looking at them.[53] Olin recalls Bourdieu in order to make one of the central points of her book: "how photographs look may be less central to their habitus than how people look at them. Or how people refuse to, fail to, or simply do not look at them."[54] By this, Olin means that there is a recognizable way not just of posing for photographs, but looking through them: the scroll, the search, the comment, the split-second judgment that is conjoined with the archive, the record, the stilling of activity and affect.

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[51] For more, see Bourdieu's essay "Photographic Practice as an Index and an Instrument of Integration," in: Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* (London: Polity Press, 1990).
[52] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
[53] Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 2012, 15.
[54] Ibid., 17.

What I find so significant about Olin's distinction is the *act* of looking at a photograph as productive, even generative. In connecting back to Saltzman and collective memory, Olin notes, "It is possible to regard the role that photographic practices play in witnessing as equivalent to an action."[55] As photographs circulate, people register events, and the feelings or memories they evoke, as their own. The power of visual technology, then, is in both capturing a memory but also producing it. By looking at and circulating such visual strategies, we are creating recognizable substitutions that are layered in their understanding, rather than isolated. Rebecca Schneider dismantles the romance of such perceived isolation in her essay "Solo, Solo, Solo," in which—amidst a discussion of what could really possibly be so "solo" about performance—she argues, "The photograph appears to represent a singular event. It appears to document a performance by a singular artist and to stand as a trace of that original solo action."[56] Schneider goes on to say, thinking specifically here of Yves Klein's famous photograph *Leap into the Void*, "as the historical record makes clear, the event and the image is a re-enactment of an event, not the event itself. And, it is the re-enactment that never took place 'as real' … It is, thus, a record of a re-enactment that never arrives at the 'real' it sought to cite via repetition, even as it strives to make the act *present* for witness."[57] Within this, the photograph both cites and creates through repetition and circulation. Looking at a photograph, then, is an act of engagement and exchange, in which one enters into a sort of contract of response and responsibility with the work. Such a level of engagement and

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[55] Ibid., 16.
[56] Rebecca Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," in *After Criticism*, ed. Gavin Butt (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 29–30.
[57] Ibid., 31.

exchange is not dissimilar to the experience of the live audience member. Thus, not only does an understanding of photography that focuses on the action of looking challenge the idea that one must be at a performance in order to understand it, but it also refutes the idea that any performance or photograph or viewing experience is an isolated one; instead, all acts of looking are mediated and networked.

All of these authors center the meaning and importance of a photograph as its looking at, rather than its taking. Taken together, their perspectives provide a framework for thinking about how what is *not* in the photograph, or what we *think* we see in a photograph when we view it, is as meaningful as what information a photograph does yield up to our gaze. Particularly when we view a photograph over and over, in varying contexts, what we think we remember seeing is enhanced by repetition. In her seminal work *On Photography*, Susan Sontag frames this as a sort of stillness in action: "Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still."[58] Sontag's view of stilling as a type of imprisonment is particularly harsh when juxtaposed with Varnedoe's concerns about the cocoon, as photographs may seem to imprison not only artists and viewers but also particular readings of artworks themselves. In this way, repetition of the still may allow for a diversity of audience, but does not necessarily imply a diversity of perspective.

Schneider concludes with this idea as well, noting, "Looking across examples, much intermedia 'solo' work depends on the fact that 'solo' acts produce choruses of witnesses – that is, various audiences of persons, objects, documents, photos or

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[58] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 163.

testimonies that stand as witnesses, each, in different ways, rendering accounts in diverse but collective reiteration."[59] She calls performance events "veritable witness machine[s]," in that they produce witnesses ad infinitum into the future because of their documentation. In this process, the "site of the event is in the witnessing, the re-telling/re-seeing, not in the 'event' itself; and yet the 'event itself' becomes what is told in retelling."[60] Schneider echoes Varnedoe's concern at the beginning of my Introduction. By now, the pictures are so amply wrapped in words—the images and their accompanying stories so circulated through re-telling—that the reality of the event itself is no longer the actual inquiry. Rather, the focus is on how we (as art historians) might (along with other witnesses of varying types) act as witnesses, and what would be gained or lost in that exchange.

As photography theory and history is so concerned with presence—either in the form of the aura, the "it" that is there, or the substitution—performance theory has taken up presence as well. My reasons for writing about performance photographs with an attention to presence are particularly shaped by Peggy Phelan, who draws a connection between performance and photography through the characteristics of the claims of photo history: presumed uniqueness and built-in repetition. She argues, "We have tended to fetishize the uniqueness of each live performance while neglecting its repetitive aspects, and we have tended to ignore the complex performances involved in both taking and seeing photographs. Like

[59] Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," 42.
[60] Ibid.

photography, performance is rooted in copying."[61] With this in mind, my interest in performance photographs is a choice to forefront the ways in which performance is rooted in reproduction, and how this creates photographic documentation that is always already transparent about its own historicization. While Phelan believes that "we have tended to ignore the complex performances involved in both taking and seeing photographs," my dissertation considers those performances that are produced intentionally alongside their photographic (and often filmic) documentation. They have already been given over to history by purposefully being documented. Thus, we cannot ignore the ways we *look at* that documentation in the form of photographs, including what, how, when, and where we see.

Just as with interviews, documentary photographs uses and purposes within art history are several-fold and often overlapping. First, they provide what we might call logistical information: Where was a performance or event? Who was there? What happened throughout? Second, they provide access to a type of privileged viewing in which certain elements or aspects of a performance may be more visible to viewers of a photograph seen after the event itself. As an example, we could think of Gavin Butt's analysis of Samuel R. Delany's account of Allen Kaprow's *18 Happenings*, in which audience members' views were intentionally obscured during the performance whereas photographs of the work provide perspectives that viewers did not have at the time.[62] Third, they offer compelling evidence of potential

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[61] Peggy Phelan, "Haunted Stages: Performance and the Photographic Effect," in *Haunted: Contemporary Photography, Video, Performance*, ed. Jennifer Blessing and Nat Trotman (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010), 54.
[62] Gavin Butt, "Happenings in History, Or, the Epistemology of the Memoir," *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no. 2 (2001): 115–26.

historical narratives around an event. Put another way, we look to them as support for our own interpretations and understanding of the artwork, the artist, and the audience (even when we leave out the presence of the photographer). There are many cases in which documentary photographs are used to almost completely propel a certain theory or interpretation of a work, and my first chapter considers one of these—the photographs of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* performance and their critical reception—in particular.

By more clearly defining these purposes, we may begin to understand Olin's' argument that looking at a photograph "is more act than reading; it produces more than it understands."[63]

Similar to interviews, the discipline of art history especially prioritizes documentary photographs as primary sources, particularly in the cases of performances or events, even though photo history and theory has established photographs as highly mediated and ultimately dependent on the value determined in their social exchange. Essentially, as art historians, we know that photographs are fraught pieces of evidence, but we keep using them anyway, out of both choice and necessity. We expect performance photographs to offer us access to an experience otherwise lost because of time, because in them we see not only the artist's body but also contemporary viewers, who in some cases are understood as adequate substitutions for ourselves as viewers in the present day.

Evidence and Testimony

[63] Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 2012, 3.

The literature on interviews and photographs emphasizes the document, as I previously outlined as my concern, but mostly does so in terms of a certain set of rhetorical affiliations: evidence and testimony. Photographs and interviews are discussed as "evidence" in that they are sources used by art historians to support or defend historical conclusions while visual and rhetorical strategies are talked about as providing "testimony" about events, experiences, and feelings. I want to draw attention to these terms because not all of the authors I discuss offer clear definitions of "evidence" and "testimony," particularly in terms of what responses are elicited by these types of evidential or testimonial documents. Thus, here I will provide my own working definitions of evidence and testimony, as understanding these terms is crucial to understanding our response and responsibility to these documents.

While "evidence" plays a role in a number of fields, perhaps most obviously in the legal arena, art historian Gavin Butt significantly informs my understanding of it. I choose Butt as a guide because his scholarship focuses on the ways in which history is produced and knowledge is made, emphasizing the various complex contexts that contribute to our sociocultural understandings. His writing also often deals specifically with how truth is at stake in artworks (such as performances) and their documentation, as with his 2001 article "Happenings in History, or, the Epistemology of the Memoir." Butt expands this type of work in his 2005 book *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, in which he Butt traces histories of artists through rumors or presumptions about their sexuality in order to show that such gossip impacts not only the artists' works

but the visibility of the artists' bodies as well. In complicating the emphasis on facts within art history, since gossip is valuable both when it is and is not true, Butt aims to "queer" the writing of art history by practicing "an intentioned embrace of some of the things that are customarily taken to be bad."[64] To do so, Butt asks readers to adjust what may qualify as evidence. He states, "[G]ay art history has more commonly been concerned with the actual 'facts' of who was or wasn't gay" and has therefore "been dogged by the relative paucity of sexual *evidence*."[65] This means that rather than thinking about how socio-cultural concepts of gayness, homosexuality, and maleness impact the field of art history, art historians focus instead on the alleged "facts" or "truths" of history: who was or wasn't "actually" gay, and what kind of evidence or activity might prove this.[66] Thus, (art) historians get caught up in trying to find incontrovertible evidence of sexual activity, and in the midst of doing so, often bemoan "the lack of available *testimony* from (still) closeted artists and critics" in order to validate their own theories.[67] Evidence and testimony here are linked, then, in the name of art historical research. Yet by defining gossip as evidence, and thereby arguing that evidence is valuable even when it is unreliable, Butt dismisses the idea of searching for the "truth" about the sexuality of these artists. His aim then is not to collect evidence or testimony that might demonstrably prove a fact about an artist's sexual activity, but instead to trouble evidence as being

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[64] Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 8.
[65] Ibid., 5–6. Emphasis added.
[66] David Getsy discusses this as well, in his 2015 book *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender*.
[67] Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, 5–6. Emphasis added.

entirely visible in the work or on the artist, and in this way allowing for "nonevidential evidence" to be valued.[68]

Butt's main nonevidential evidence is gossip, about which he employs artist-poet John Giorno's identification of gossip as the so-labeled "hardcore of art history."[69] About this particular type of exchange of information, Butt argues, "as a form of witnessed knowledge, [gossip] is often taken by academics as being only as unreliable as the person conveying the information, and, by definition, it is not *necessarily* unsubstantiated."[70] I understand performance photographs and artist interviews to work in a comparable way; the information they offer is often judged by the reliability of their circumstances, in that a particular point of access or interviewer bio lends credibility to their production. Performance photographs and artist interviews are tools, just like gossip: they provide "those meanings which exist, as it were, *to the side* of the [artwork]; ones which refuse to stabilize as visible sign but which nevertheless come to animate its significance or affect."[71] In this way, the subjects of my concern are certainly the artists, artworks, pictures, and words named throughout, but even more so the meanings found to the side of these subjects, the "stuff" of art history that can be gathered not just in conversation between you and me, but also in looking with a magnifying glass or reading between the lines.

Looking to the "stuff" of art history to provide truth about artists and artworks, rather than operating as if truth can be entirely contained within the artist

[68] Ibid., 21.
[69] Ibid., 2.
[70] Ibid., 6.
[71] Ibid., 20.

or work itself, is not without its risks. One could lose sight of the nuances of a work or of the value of formal analysis, or one could ignore the very real impacts circumstances and contexts have on both art works and artists' lives. One could also start to believe that the *only* possible truths are those contained outside of the artist or artwork, thus operating from a constant place of skepticism rather than a place of invested belief. But the point of valuing historical evidence like artist interviews and performance photographs is not to put these many objects of study at odds, but rather to understand the ways in which they all contain valuable (if mediated) truths that may be put into conversation. Butt explains this in terms of gossip, which would potentially function as an entirely pejorative term, if not for that fact that "even if gossip [or some other type of nonevidential evidence] gets some things slightly skewed, it nevertheless contains some kernel of truth" and thus provides an idea, an inkling, a trace "of some historical real—or some event, act, or identity."[72] For the art historian, such an idea poses a challenge to what constitutes historical evidence and how we might interpret that evidence; as Butt notes, "If all of this places [his] book in an experimental relation to the discourse of history in general, then it also raises methodological questions about the interpretive procedures of *art* history in particular."[73] I argue that what is at the center of those methodological questions is how we understand truth in relationship to documentation, as truth becomes the lynchpin of historicizing the present or recent past through a reliance on the documentary photograph and the interview.

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[72] Ibid., 7.
[73] Ibid., 20.

In writing about and with photographs and interviews, I employ a post-positivist approach to truth. Post-positivism developed in response to positivism, which insists that truth can be found only through direct sensory experience that is then combined with reason, a process that creates certitude of knowledge.[74] A positivist perspective relies on a belief that there are absolute truths about humans' existence just as there are absolute laws of nature, like gravity. Post-positivism, which is manifested mostly in writings on philosophy and science, rejects the principle of the absolute. Instead, post-positivism proposes that truth can indeed exist and be found, but always in a mediated form. There is no possibility for non-objective truth, because our understanding of truth cannot be omnipotent, authoritative, or removed from our experiences.[75]

Within a post-positivist framework, I understand the ontology of past events to be know-able but only through and within their own mediation and our own subjectivity. Thus, the truth that I am concerned with is a truth that is networked among myself and other objects and actors within history. Here, I recall Jones, who

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[74] French philosopher Auguste Comte is credited with developing our modern understanding of positivism, initially proposed in his series of texts, *The Course in Positive Philosophy*, published in the mid-18th century. Modern sociologists, including Emile Durkheim, quickly took up Comte's ideas and now variations of positivism continue to appear in branches of philosophy and science, despite the well-grounded criticism of its oversimplification of relationships between humans and the world around them.

[75] For further reading, see Paula M.L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia's book *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (University of California Press, 2000), as they are particularly concerned with the intersection of post-positivism and identity. This collection of essays provides an extensive bibliography on post-positivism and objectivity. For a discussion of post-positivism and science in particular, one can refer to John H. Zammito's *A Nice Derangement of Epistemes: Post-positivism in the Study of Science from Quine to Latour* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

stridently defends her ability to write about performances she has not seen by focusing on subjective perspective. She notes, "While the live situation may enable the phenomenological relations of flesh-to-flesh engagement, the documentary exchange (viewer/reader ←→ document) is equally intersubjective."[76] If in positivism truth is defined by such a phenomenological relation that can only be derived through presence, post-positivism makes clear that presence is just as much a factor in other forms of exchange, since we always come to them subjectively. Furthermore, the truth that we shape and propose relies on our ability to change the position from which we may witness the past; as Jones concludes, "it is hard to identify the patterns of history while one is embedded in them."[77] Instead, we get at truth by acknowledging the layers of mediation existing between us and any experience, and in doing so extending a notion of presence to that which goes beyond the merely immediately physical.

Witnessing

Both Butt and Jones write about evidence and testimony as elements of witnessing, but neither completely fleshes out that framework in their own texts. Yet the presence of witnessing—that it appears not just in the texts of Butt and Jones but also Saltzman, Olin, Barthes, and Schneider—proposes the centrality of understanding what it might really mean to be a witness in the contemporary moment. What does one witness, and what is expected as a response?

Answers to these questions often forge their roots in trauma theory, since psychoanalytically and culturally, witnessing and trauma are linked experiences.

[76] Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," 12.
[77] Ibid.

What we might typically think of as traumatic events have, of course, always been going on since the beginning of the human species, but early theories of trauma begin with Sigmund Freud's fascination with patients who seemed trapped in their previous experience—an interest that not only appears chronologically parallel to concerns ways of seeing and understanding photographs but also provides the foundation for talk theory formatted as an interview, as mentioned earlier. Trauma means "wound" in Greek, and Freud was interested in how trauma is in fact a wound or an injury of the mind, rather than the body. In *Moses and Monotheism* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, both developed and written in the 1920s and '30s, Freud puts forth the idea that trauma is an event that simply cannot be fully processed and understood as it occurs, and thus repeats for us, as we continue to try to assimilate such an experience into our subjecthood.[78] In her review of Freud's psychological vision of trauma as it intersects with literature, Cathy Caruth writes, trauma "is always the story of a wound that cried out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language."[79] Trauma is thus most fundamentally about the stakes of knowing the truth about our own experiences. With Freud's proposal that trauma destroys the ability to conceive of one's self as a subject, Caruth asserts, "Traumatic experience, beyond the

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[78] See: Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1939); Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Norton, 1975).
[79] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it."[80]

This paradox is played out in Caruth's text by considering Freud's conception of trauma and repression alongside that of Jacques Lacan, another foundational if at times competing voice in trauma theory. In his 1900 text *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud relays a story told to him by a patient, though not of her own dream; rather, it is someone else's dream that she has now fixated on. The circumstances of the dream are that a father has been watching over his sick child and goes to the next room over to sleep, and while dreaming, the child appears by the father's bed and asks his father, "Don't you see I'm burning?" The father wakes and rushes to the next room, to discover that his dead child has been partially engulfed in flames from a fallen candle.[81] In this example, Freud is concerned with how the dream may keep the father asleep in order to shield him from the violence of his reality, namely his sick and then soon dead child now burned. The dream fulfills the father's wish that his child still be alive and able to come to him, to talk to him, even for just a moment longer. On the other hand, in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan suggests "that it is because the father dreams, paradoxically enough, that he precisely wakes up."[82] Such a shift in perspective reveals how the traumatic may not always be where we think it is, as in Lacan's reading, awakening from the dream but

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[80] Ibid., 91–92.
[81] For Freud's complete account of the dream and his interpretation, see: Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 547–550.
[82] As quoted in: Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 99. For Lacan's full analysis, see: Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Allain Miller (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 57–60.

too late to help the child is more traumatic than the death of the child itself, because waking up means experiencing "the necessity and impossibility of responding to another's death."[83] In both cases, the father has seen his child's death but does not know it in that he did not experience death himself, which is a traumatic form of survival.

At its most broad, witness theory attempts to negotiate the paradox of trauma: that to see an event is not to actually know it. Negotiating such a paradox means grappling with Caruth's primary question, drawn from Freud's observations and Lacan's interpretations: "Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?"[84] This is a question that opens up the many layers of witnessing: an individual may experience or witness a traumatic event; an individual may witness their own response to such an event, either in the moment or throughout the rest of their lives; other individuals may witness the same event or another event entirely, those individuals may witness their own similar or differing responses, or they may only witness the individual's response after the event (where the event is both the encounter and the ongoing experience). The inherent layers of witnessing are embedded in witness theory, in which it can be difficult to parse out who exactly might be the witness and to what in any given exchange of crying out and addressing.

Writing almost a century after Freud, who composed *Moses and Monotheism* in the shadow of Hitler and with concerns about Jewish persecution, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben composed 1999 book *Remnants of Auschwitz: The*

[83] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 100.
[84] Ibid., 7.

Witness and the Archive. Agamben grapples with the paradox of trauma: "The Shoah is an event without witnesses in the double sense that it is impossible to bear witness to it from the inside—since no one can bear witness from the inside of death, and there is no voice for the disappearance of voice—and from the outside—since the 'outsider' is by definition excluded from the event."[85] To attempt to understand such an impossible reality about an event that *must* be remembered, Agamben tries to explicate exactly what is meant by "witness" through a tracing of the word's origin, noting that in Latin there are actually two words for this term:

> The first word, *testis*, from which our word 'testimony' derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party. The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bare witness to it… But this also means that [one's] testimony [as a witness] has nothing to do with the acquisition of facts for a trial ([one] is not neutral enough for this, [one] is not a *testis*).[86]

This etymological division elucidates the differences not just between testifying and witnessing, but also between ethics and law, which Agamben asserts are quite different, since law is not about truth or justice (as an ethical response would be) but instead only about judgment. Clear judgment (either guilty or not guilty) becomes the "substitute for the true and the just," because law cannot go any further than a sentence of judgment through the form of a trial.[87] Thus, in the same way that a witness cannot in fact testify, because he is simply too close to the truth, a trial cannot restore justice, because it is by definition removed from the truth. The

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[85] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 35.
[86] Ibid., 17.
[87] Ibid., 18.

problem with such a system, as Agamben identifies, is that we confuse judgment with justice, and therefore understand trials to be a matter of overcoming or solving the trauma of something like the Holocaust.

The reality, according to Agamben, is quite the opposite: "The 'true' witnesses, the 'complete witnesses,' are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are those who 'touched bottom,'" by which he means those who did not survive.[88] Because they are no longer living, "survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses," but they do so knowing that they "must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness" because—of course—the dead have nothing more to say.[89] And as we confuse the categories of witness, we also confuse our own responsibilities to witnesses themselves. Trials and sentences "articulate zones of non-responsibility," allowing for a belief the confrontation is either over or not ours.[90] Here, clear divisions of presence and absence fail us, because the presence of law signifies the absence of truth while the presence of survivors professes the absence of witnesses.

While Agamben's work grows out of the incredible trauma of the Holocaust, he urges writers to avoid situating the experiences and events associated with the Holocaust as "unsayable" or "unspeakable."[91] He does so because to make what happened at Auschwitz unsayable is to assert it as incomprehensible, and thereby to glorify it as un-knowable in its exceptionalism. Instead of fixating on something as unsayable, he argues for the idea that "language, in order to bear witness, must give

[88] Ibid., 34.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 21.
[91] Ibid., 32.

way to a non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness."[92] Furthermore, he encourages readers not to dismiss the possibility of testimony but rather to embrace the ways in which a lack of "complete witnesses" can alter our understanding of what qualifies as testimony; the absence of complete testimony "makes it necessary to look for its meaning in an unexpected area."[93]

We could think of this approach as Derridean approach, as I discussed earlier, in which the written word eclipses the spoken one, simultaneously securing its existence and marking its loss. We can also take Agamben's thoughts as encouragement to seek out the truths of witnessing in something other than the facts of testimony; we should instead be looking for meaning in unexpected areas, and in doing so, adjusting our definitions of reliability. Reliability—or the paradox of witnessing an event without actually knowing, so then speaking as a witness while also not able to witness—is of great concern to many writers addressing or using witness theory, including Kelly Oliver, whose 2001 book *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* begins with how this paradox is related to truth. She opens with a story about the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, a project that began in the late 1970s to collect stories from Holocaust survivors and now comprises over 4,000 video-recorded testimonies housed at Yale University, which facilitates the sharing of such materials with researchers and the general public. About one survivor's recorded tale, Oliver recounts,

> The woman reported four chimneys going up in flames and exploding, but historians insisted that since there was only one chimney blown up, her testimony was incorrect and should be discredited in its

[92] Ibid., 39.
[93] Ibid., 34.

> entirety because she proved herself an unreliable witness… The psychoanalysts responded that the woman was not testifying to the number of chimneys blown up but to something more 'radical' and more 'crucial'—namely, the seemingly unimaginable occurrence of Jewish resistance at Auschwitz.[94]

Here, unreliability becomes a legitimate source of reality, in that the act of witnessing reveals different truths of experience than those gleaned from other sources. For Oliver, this unreliability is in fact a strength: "Seeing the impossible—what did not happen—gave [the woman] the strength to make what seemed impossible possible: surviving the Holocaust."[95] Her account does not help those outside of the event to understand how many chimneys there were; rather, it produces the chimneys—the reality and the implications of their presence—for us. Witnessing, then, provides veracity in its very act of doing by making survival, and its subsequent words, present.

Jane Blocker discusses the same story in her book *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* in order to position both Oliver's account and the original recording by psychoanalyst Dori Laub as ekphrasis-like, in that both (and Laub in particular) describe the "survivor's act of witness as a work of art, as though the story's details were those of a painting or photograph."[96] Yet, as Blocker goes on to say, the inaccuracies of the woman's story throw history into debate, in which the "image painted by this witness is, to the historian's mind, inaccurate, unrealistic, and

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[94] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 1.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xvii.

wanting in detail…it lacks the documentary accuracy of the photographic."[97] Blocker points out that both Laub and Oliver are concerned with validating the woman's testimony, even with its flaws, as if they themselves are appropriate judges of traumatic memory. But what Blocker's critique also indicates is that the story becomes photographic in its repetition—told and re-told by the survivor, by Laub, by Oliver, by Blocker, and others, and in this way circulated like a photograph.

Oliver's concern with validating testimony underlines her notion of how response and responsibility work within witnessing. In the introduction to her book, Oliver states, "Address-ability and response-ability are what I identify with the process of witnessing. Subjectivity is the result of the process of witnessing. Witnessing is not only the basis for othered subjectivity; witnessing is also the basis for all subjectivity; and oppression and subordination work to destroy the possibility of witnessing and therefore undermines subjectivity."[98] According to Oliver, the most pivotal act of witnessing is in engaging in exchange, which affirms the subjecthood of both parties because it involves both parties in witnessing (one recounting what she witnessed and one listening to that account). Oliver's model proposes a modification of recognition within the act of witnessing, in that when we witness something (or report on events from the past), we are only able to report on that thing in terms that match our own experiences; in other words, we cannot accommodate for that which we do not already know. Yet it is the exchange that brings about the "transformative power of witnessing," since "[r]eality and

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[97] Ibid., xviii. Quoting from: Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 61.
[98] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 7.

experience are themselves processes continually transformed through witnessing."[99] This exchange between subjects brings an ethical component to witnessing, where witnessing does not need to be limited only to trauma. Blocker makes witnessing an obvious part of our everyday existence by arguing any kind of witnessing may be traumatic, in that "to be a witness means by definition to stand outside events, even those quotidian events we experience directly."[100] The ethics of such everyday witnessing become more about exchange than confirmation or validation in that, according to Oliver, we are "obligated to respond to our environment and other people in ways that open up rather than close off the possibility of response."[101] Blocker clearly explains this ethical shift: "To witness is to occupy a position from which one is able to address another, an other whose responsibility is to respond."[102]

Networked Witnessing

With the response and responsibility of witnessing at the forefront, Blocker poses a question about the actual act of witnessing: "Given the political stakes of witnessing (of the sworn testimony's production of reality), the moral stakes at work in interpreting acts of witness, and the artistic stakes of representation, how then should we examine and occupy the domain of witness?"[103] Blocker shifts the terms of this question in order to examine not "how" but "who," by situating the witness as a privileged subject position and going on to consider this subject

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[99] Ibid., 106.
[100] Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony*, 37.
[101] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 15.
[102] Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony*, 103.
[103] Ibid., xix.

position in specific relation to visibility and invisibility. My answer to her question is that we should occupy such a domain by being attentive to the ways in which our witnessing is mediated across multiple platforms, and thereby networked rather than dyadic. Oliver's notion of response and responsibility in witnessing is based in a one-to-one association. This dyad comes out of the circumstances of Oliver's examples, which are primarily located in the literary and psychoanalytic—and thus privilege language over the visual—in which survivors of trauma are heard and validated by a listener. Oliver's model roots ethical witnessing in the notion that subjectivity is affected by trauma, and that damaged subjectivity can be repaired through speaking and being heard; thus, for her, "address-ability and response-ability are the roots of subjectivity."[104] For Oliver, that address-ability and response-ability requires the dyad, where one person is the speaker and another is the listener/responder, in order to generate the healing activity of witnessing. The "transformative power of witnessing" she references, then, is based on mutual recognition as the process of change. But transformation can also result from the confusion or disjuncture caused by the unfamiliar or even the unknown, which does not preclude the possibility of response and responsibility; instead, such un-recognition can potentially uncover and subsequently validate unanticipated truths, or truths that are shared not through corresponding experiences but in recognition of the unfamiliar.

According to Oliver, historians, who listened to testimony from Holocaust survivors in order to "hear confirmation of what they already knew," only

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[104] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 7.

complicate such a dyadic relationship compared to psychoanalysts, who were "listening to hear something new, something beyond comprehension."[105] This division is possible in the case of something like the Holocaust primarily because the Nazis kept such meticulous records, which historians use as primary sources to determine the facts that can then be compared to survivors' stories. But art records are rarely so meticulous, even though art historians still frequently turn to primary sources in order to glean a comparable level of factual information. With that in mind, I question: are art historians, then, always listening (or reading, or looking) for what we already know, or think we know? Oliver poses a version of this question: "What are the effective and affective differences between listening for what we already know and recognize in [a person's] testimony and listening for what we don't know, or what is beyond recognition?"[106] Oliver is only concerned with asking this question of an exchange between two people, because, again, her dyadic model of witnessing emphasizes recovering subjecthood. But the question could be productively asked of the tools I have discussed here: What are the effective and affective differences between listening or looking for what we already know and recognize in a photograph or an interview and listening or looking for what we don't know? In historical evidence like photographs and interviews, what might be beyond our recognition?

Answering these questions requires acknowledging the complexity of the ways in which documents come to us, both socio-culturally and art historically. Within a documentary photograph of a performance, acts of witnessing are

[105] Ibid., 1.
[106] Ibid., 8.

incredibly layered: there is a performer looking at the cameramen and audience, the audience looking at the performer and cameramen, the cameramen looking at the performer and the audience, the art historian looking through the camera at the performer and/or the audience. Interviews are similar: there is an interviewer and interviewee, but also a transcriber, a translator, an editor, and a reader. Layers are continually added as such documents are circulated and historicized, drawing attention to the modes through which such facts may be delivered (such as textbooks, image searches, or even slide identification exams). This is indicative of the contemporary nature of witnessing, which is driven by desire for experience as well as global access.

Like photo theory, current views on psychoanalysis, and post-positivism, our understanding of a global experience economy is particularly modern. Globalization (a force that is economic, social, cultural, and geopolitical) paired with both decolonization and decentralization of geographies and governments have connected whole countries and single individuals in unprecedented ways. Terry Smith summarizes this through the lens of awareness, in saying, "What each nation does becomes quickly known around the world, and can have global consequences. Equally, no nation, however large or small, can shield itself from global economic, political, technological, and cultural currents."[107] Smith is drawing here on work done by scholars such as philosophers Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, whose postmodern and post-Marxist perspectives influence their proposal that globalization has forced a disintegration of the nation-state to make way for the rise

[107] Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 258.

of international alliances and organizations. Scholars such as Smith, Irit Rogoff, Charlotte Bydler, and Grant Kester link the impact of such a transition to artists making work that is transnational in its concerns and subjectivities.[108] The artists I consider in my chapters are working just prior and firmly within the era of globalization, and their performance practices as well as interview subjects make visible the many questions of cultural exchange, national identity, and access that are relevant to their work. Scholars, too, bring global perspectives to their interpretations and at times uphold no-longer clear divisions, as I will discuss in my chapters, from American writers understanding Yoko Ono's work as a direct product of her traumatic experiences in Japan during World War II (without, in general, a great deal of self-reflection as to how the United States created those circumstances and what it might mean for Ono to be performing certain works with American audiences) to Benjamin Buchloh's seemingly derogatory remark in a 2005 interview with Thomas Hirschhorn, in which Hirschhorn admires Andy Warhol's criticality and Buchloh asks, "Is that what Europeans still think?" prompting Hirschhorn to respond, "Fine. *You* live in America."[109]

But what scholars' writings also reveal is a fixation on experience, which is a concept deeply tied to globalization. When Smith says that what happens in one nation can now be quickly known and felt by those around the world, he is also

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[108] See: Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Artworld Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 2004); Grant H. Kester, *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

[109] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," *October* 113 (Summer 2005): 77.

talking about an experience economy that is both global and particular in its effects. The concept of the experience economy grows out of research on consumer behavior and business management, leading to the prioritization of creating memorable experiences and a certain "feeling" for customers with the intention of ultimately providing "transformation" in addition to services. According to Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, this economy is the natural progression out of agriculture, to industry, to service, and now experience.[110] Though Pine and Gilmore's examples are mostly major corporations like Starbucks or Walt Disney, and criticisms of their concept include the assertion that all exchange is experience-based and thus there is not anything so particular about this shift other than name, it is not difficult for us to see the ripple effects of the experience economy in art-making and practice. In her essay on the legacy of first-wave feminism in contemporary practices of photography and self-representation, produced on the occasion of the seminal exhibition *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Abigail Solomon-Godeau speculates about the impact of a global experience economy—fed by psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, and postmodernism—on our possible conceptions of subjecthood. About the intellectual turn that the global experience economy has brought about, she writes, "Although by no means universally espoused, a conception of a radically disunified, divided, plural, and dispersed subject has now become a kind of default position, even a prevailing orthodoxy in

[110] For a more complete description, see: Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

the more intellectual and theoretically sophisticated precincts of the art world."[111] Solomon-Godeau ultimately connects this to the power of feminist artists and artworks, which resisted a unified selfhood by exploring passivity and documentation against complete self-representation. She concludes, "From our present position in time, and given the power of the New Right and social conservatives, and the accompanying backlash against feminism, it is more necessary that we—we as feminists—recharge our batteries, so to speak, by recognizing the accomplishments of the women artists who, with so few artistic precedents to guide them, dared to challenge, mock, subvert, or deconstruct omnipresent regimes of representation."[112]

Contemporary artists such as Pierre Huyghe, Thomas Hirschhorn, Marina Abramović, or The Yes Men offer examples of such deconstruction even as their work attempts to create specific audience experiences through both traditional and new media platforms. But the origins of their practices can similarly be traced back, as Solomon-Godeau argues, to those of Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono, Cindy Sherman, and (earlier works by) Marina Abramović. Furthermore, our privileging of historical evidence like artist interviews and documentary photographs is a privileging of experience (that of the artist, the audience, the interviewer, and the photographer) while at the same time a willingness to rely on the networks that globalization makes available. Thus, we as (feminist) contemporary art historians must realize that the potential usefulness of witnessing is not at least entirely in confirming a

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[111] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Woman Who Never Was: Self-Representation, Photography, and First-Wave Feminist Art," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 337.
[112] Ibid., 345.

unified sense of self, but in recognizing and valuing the complexities of selfhood and self-representation, as those complexities are available to us through historical evidence.

Within the experience-driven and global economy of the contemporary, the witnessing I identify here is what I call "networked witnessing." My proposal identifies witnessing as no longer dyadic (or, at least, no longer solely dyadic) but instead fully interchanged through multiple platforms and people. Networked witnessing is still about response and responsibility, but the goals that Oliver identifies—recognition and validation of humanity—seem less isolated within a larger network rooted in multi-modal communication. Such a network requires variety within responsibility. We should be aware of the effective and affective differences that come as part of our looking and listening, rather than treating these tools as confirmation for what we already believe we already know. In networked witnessing, our first responsibility then is to look for the unfamiliar and to acknowledge what might be beyond our recognition. What this requires is attention not only to the complexities of the subjects of our studies, including artists and artworks (given that those complexities have built entire fields around biography and practice), but also equal engagement with the complexities of the objects of our studies, namely photographs and interviews.

In changing Oliver's question to be not just about dyadic human-to-human witnessing but instead to be about objects and humans across various lines of communication, networked witnessing focuses on multiple exchanges around the subjectivity of both humans and objects, rather than automatically privileging the

artist's appearance in such tools as primary. As networking witnessing breaks the dyad, we no longer promote the idea that centering the artist (or the art historian, for that matter) is the only valuable way to use or understand photographs and interviews. Instead, we value the ways in which these materials reach us as well as the multiple layers of witnessing happening within, on, and to them. Such layers—personal, ideological, historical, and socio-cultural—of networked witnessing are central to challenging the dyadic nature of traditional witnessing scholarship, as these many layers realize a post-positivist approach, in which we move from searching for one truth to understanding any truth as related to our own subjectivity. In such a scenario, the historians and the psychoanalysts are no longer at odds, in that both are engaged in valuing subjective truth rather than confirming their own knowledge.

In order to engage these layers as a way to understand response and responsibility within networked witnessing, I examine my objects of study—both documentary photographs and artist interviews—through an acknowledgement of the inter-view. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "interview" comes originally from the French *entrevue* (to come upon seeing), in which *s'entrevoir* means to see each other. Even with its current definition as an oral examination or conversation, the concept of the interview is based in mutual seeing, or mutual recognition. Kvale and Brinkmann draw on this origin as well, usefully defining an interview as "the inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a

theme of mutual interest."[113] But by engaging in inter-viewing, I am employing a framework that acknowledges and incorporates the views of many persons and technologies (such as the camera or the art magazine), rather than emphasizing an exchange between only two persons. In examining interviews then, I am thinking about the ways in which multiple (and multi-modal) views become inter-related or inter-woven through the course of a discussion. And in examining photographs, I am concerned with how the many views of an image—the performer, the audience, the cameramen, the historian—also become inter-related, with "inter-" (coming from the Latin *inter*) revealing the mutual (and again, multi-modal) exchanges between or among such witnesses. Both artist interviews and performance photographs can be understood through the inter-view. In this way, response and responsibility of witnessing is not limited to confirmation or validation. Even as our contemporary practices rely heavily on documentary photographs and artist interviews as historical evidence, our relationship to these tools is much more complex than confirmation or validation. Imagining witnessing as networked provides scaffolding for approaching these objects of study with a focus on the presence not only of our own subjectivity in any given exchange, but also that of others.

All I Have

If Oliver is concerned with the question, "What kind of recognition, if any, do survivors want and need?" then I find myself concerned with what subjects of interest or inquiry—what examples of historical evidence—could be categorized as

[113] Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2.

survivors.[114] Here I do not wish to diminish the sheer extremity of surviving something like the Holocaust, a reality that is truly unrecognizable to me in many ways. I do aim, however, to use Oliver's phrasing to think about our treatment of art history's "survivors," namely documentary photographs and the artist's own words. An example helps to clarify: in her essay "Remembering Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*," art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson makes an argument about how essential documentation is to any understanding of the now-famous performance work in which Ono sat passively onstage while audience members were invited to come up and use scissors to cut off her clothing. Bryan-Wilson ends her essay by stating, "Today the photographs are all we have to remember this event; and although they are flat relics, they are by no means mute. To conclude, I leave you with these images, these memories…."[115] For Bryan-Wilson, the photographs are the survivors, by no means mute, useful in their ability to offer us memories.

This is an odd, if not disciplinarily unusual, conclusion for Bryan-Wilson to draw. Obviously, the photographs are not all we have to remember this event; there are the instructions of the work, there is a nearly 10-minute long film of one of the performances, there are the experiences of the cameramen and the audience members, there are the bits of cloth that have been saved or discarded or circulated by the participants, there are frequent recent performances of the work (including one by Ono), there are the common inclusions of the instructions, photographs, or film of the work in current exhibitions, there are thousands of writerly takes on the

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[114] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 8.
[115] Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," *Oxford Art Journal* 26, no. 1 (2003): 122.

performances both from the time and into the present, and then there is Ono herself, who spoke a great deal about *Cut Piece* at the time of the initial events and continues to talk about the experience. I don't think that Bryan-Wilson is unaware of these other "relics," as she calls historical evidence, but I do think that she is manifesting a particular art historical tone for writing about performance from the 1960s and '70s: she is bemoaning the fact that she must write about such iterations of *Cut Piece* without having seen the work itself, because the photographs lack a *presence*, and she wishes there was just something *more*.

When she says that these photographs are all we have, she is placing her emphasis on the *all*, implying that we not only desire them to be more but also that somehow they could never be enough. Framing such tools of the job in this way undermines the networks in which these objects appear, networks which we are ourselves are a part of, and thereby privileges them as independent truth-tellers that also helpfully validate the truths we use them to tell. In the case studies that follow, I approach understanding performance photographs and artist interviews by reminding myself that I am all *they* have. Rather than wishing they were more, I push myself to be more to and for them, by looking for the unfamiliar—or even the unrecognizable—rather than seeking in them confirmation of what I already know. I am obligated as an art historian to be an ethical caretaker of this evidence. We should not say that these documents are all we have, then, meaning that they are the only things that provide access to the privileged site or experience of the artist. Instead, we should say, act, and write as if we are all the documents have, meaning that we are responsible for listening and looking for the unfamiliar, and

acknowledging the ways in which historical evidence exists beyond our full recognition without discarding our ability to witness its truths. These tools have been used—these photographs have been looked at and these interviews have been read—so many times; now, our responsibility is to willingly see them anew.

What follows are case studies organized into two chapters, one on performance photographs and one on artist interviews, though there is certainly useful dialogue between them. Certain works and artists appear multiple times, not only as manifestations of the repetition evident in photographic (re)production and interview publication, but also to emphasize looking and looking again as a method of art historical practice and analysis.[116] From a quick glance at my objects of interest, it would appear I have chosen only to focus on artists already firmly entrenched in the canon of art history. This is a purposeful decision, even though I believe that critique of and intervention within such a canon is important work for art historians. I have made these choices because my most broad object of study is the networked practice of art history itself. To gain perspective, and to set a scope for my own examination, I must consider where the themes of art history that interest me—such as circulation, access, celebrity, and death—are played out across multiple platforms and between many people. Furthermore, my chapter on performance photographs includes only women while my chapter on artist

[116] My commitment to looking and looking again is deeply influenced by the writing of Lucy Lippard, particularly her perspective shared in the introduction of her 1995 book *Pink Glass Swan*, in which she writes: "Living out those contradictions [of the feminist movement and the pursuit of a feminist art criticism], I've been accused of being a moving target. But what target in its right mind wouldn't move? And what good art is not a moving target? Mobility (and flexibility) has become a strategy as well as a temperamental and intellectual preference." See: Lucy R. Lippard, *Pink Glass Swan: Selected Feminist Essays on Art* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 3.

interviews includes exchanges only between men, a division that I did not intend when beginning my research. The tendency became intentional when I realized that it revealed: (1) the much wider acceptance of women artists when placed under the heading of performance or body art, and the many documents that historically and rhetorically confirm their place in this schema, and (2) the dominance of male artists' voices within widely circulated publications, and the many systems that reinforce the desirability of "his own words" in print.

The case studies here often reveal truths for which we might not have actually gone looking. My interest is in the ways these truths then reveal our own relationship as contemporary art historians to our objects of study and to the act of historicizing. In many ways, global contemporary art history is often concerned with terms central to witness theory—reality, truth, trauma, evidence, testimony—without necessarily acknowledging a responsibility toward the tools (photographs and interviews) on which both witness theory and contemporary art history rely. Bringing witness theory to bear on contemporary art history helps to better explain how these tools can be used and what they reveal. Thus, the intervention I seek is to use the significance of exchange as proposed in witness theory in order to complicate the status of performance photographs and artist interviews as historical evidence within art history about the present and recent past. Rather than putting these sources and resources to the demonstrative work of evidencing the past, the framework of response and responsibility encourages us to respond to photographs and interviews by looking for the unfamiliar, thus building a responsibility to them as objects while also engaging in forms of validation that might happen beyond our

own subjectivities. The stakes of such a project are not isolated to single performance events or interviews, or even single pieces of historical evidence, but are a matter of a condition of the contemporary in which we're simultaneously inundated with information and also feel as if we know nothing at all. In this state, how we measure the presences and absences made manifest in and through historical evidence becomes critical. We need methodologies for sorting through all of the "stuff" of art history, as Andy Warhol quips. Here, I propose and practice one possible methodology: that of the response that is attentive to the various networks at work in and upon any object of evidence, and the responsibility to seek from historical evidence that which we do not already know.

Chapter One: The photographs in our hands

Nearly every art historian is familiar with the slide identification exam, that pedagogical practice that relies on memorization as the key factor of displaying knowledge. I took my first slide identification exam under the auspices of "Introduction to Art History," a yearlong 200-person course offered at my liberal arts undergraduate college. At the end of each semester, I was asked to identify many slides as they were projected (by this point, actual slides were no longer in use, but digital images, even as the name of the exam itself persists) onto a giant screen at the head of the classroom. To study, I—with an almost religious zeal—printed and affixed copies of each considered artwork to index cards, essentially creating a one-to-one association between the photograph of a work presented in class and its most basic details. For example, it was the spring of 2004 when I first memorized this photograph of *Cut Piece* (Figure 2)—the fairly famous and oft-restaged event in which performance artist Yoko Ono sat still while audience members were invited to cut away her clothing. If this image appeared on the screen during the exam, I knew the correct answer would be the following: "Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964-66."

The precarity of such a one-to-one association did not occur to me at the time, but is illustrative of the ways in which photographs are central to the practice of art history both logistically (art historians use photographs to teach, research, and publish) and theoretically (photographs as well as their uses have become objects of study in their own right). The infinitely reproducible photograph necessarily props up the act of memorization. Yet we know that memorization, as a

version of rote learning, is bad pedagogy; recognizing a specific image of a certain work is not the same as knowing and understanding the work or the artist. When confidently writing down "Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964-66" in my blue exam booklet, I was purposefully reducing the work's and photograph's complications to an efficient list, and in doing so, refusing to register the presence of the audience, a photographer, or even my own status as present-day viewer of mediated information.

My act of memorization was not a practice only of looking; I shuffled those index cards and flipped them front and bank hundreds of times. I handled these artworks, now all made the same scale and weight, as images that required my touch in order to be known. In my current study, I draw from the intentionality of such an art historical practice, where the consistency of the meaning of a certain image—no matter where it appeared in the deck—was paired with my own action. This action recalls Rebecca Schneider, writing in her seminal book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, examines case studies as diverse as Civil War reenactments, medieval pageant plays, and contemporary art photographs through the lens of stillness and action. In doing so, she continually circles back to Toni Morrison's feminist assertion that the future of any potential writing is "in your hands," being the hands of the reader.[117] Schneider ultimately develops this as an ethical message, encouraging her own readers to acknowledge

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[117] Schneider cites Toni Morrison's 1994 *Lecture and speech of acceptance upon the award of the Nobel Prize for literature, delivered in Stockholm on the seventh of December, nineteen hundred and ninety-three*, published by Knopf.

that the "photograph or the text or the gesture is an event that takes place 'in your hands, it's in your hands.'"[118]

A focus on hands for Schneider is in part about recalling the well-known and often-taught Bayard photograph. Hippolyte Bayard, an early experimenter in photographic technology, developed his *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man* in 1840 (Figure 3). After the French government officially credited J. L. M. Daguerre, over Bayard, with the invention of photography, Bayard composed this self-portrait as a sort of mourning card. On the back of the image is a note reading, "The corpse which you see here is that of M. Bayard, inventor of the process that has just been shown to you, or the wonderful results of which you will soon see."[119] Schneider explains that "to understand the photograph, the photograph has to meet the hands – be turned around – looked at from all sides. A body is thus both imprinted *in* the photograph, and required *of* the photograph."[120] This observation—that a photograph requires handling in order to understand how to look at it—is what makes the Bayard photograph so widely popular as a teaching tool, lending weight to Schneider's conclusion: "What you *do* with your hands becomes the photograph."[121] This is reminiscent of Allan Sekula's warning, offered in his pivotal article "The Body and the Archive," about photography's easy application toward the unrelenting progression of modernity, in which he cautions readers that photographs may easily

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[118] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 157.
[119] As reproduced in: Ibid., 166.
[120] Ibid., 167. For further discussion, see: Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999) and Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (London: Routledge, 2006).
[121] Ibid., 163.

fall into the wrong hands when put to the work of surveillance, social control, and categorization.[122]

Indeed, even when not in use by the government or another body of power, the production and experience of a photograph—the manipulation of the camera apparatus, the development of the image (either in chemical baths or through computer clicks), the passing around of school photos or sonograms—is a tactile one, as Margaret Olin discusses in her book *Touching Photographs*. So then, we must consider our physical as well as our conceptual distance from the photograph, by which I mean that we must consider our position as observers. If what we *do* with our *hands* becomes the photograph, then understanding how we handle and exchange images, again physically and metaphorically, is essential. What is at stake here is considering how photographs get put to the work of providing evidence, by tracing the ways in which photographs both drive their own reading and are read through various contexts. Thus, my intention in this chapter is to consider the following questions: In a photograph of a performance, what is lost and what is gained? What might we find hiding in plain sight, if we go looking for the unfamiliar?

The artists included here are deliberately concerned with the ways in which photographs document their performances. Artists themselves are in many cases the directors not just of performances but also of performance documentation, in some cases joining with other artists or institutions to create images that are intentionally reproduced and circulated. Of course, this is not necessarily unique to performance; painters and sculptors have also set parameters regarding how and

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[122] Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 6.

when their work may be photographed. But performance is a medium that draws on formations of "evidence" and "testimony" through its planning and practice. The performances I am interested in are scripted and often include notes and drawings (both individual and institutional) related to their execution, which is bolstered by advertising, art criticism, and other ephemera. Furthermore, art history about performance intersects eyewitness accounts with other evidence, including photographs, in order to build an intentionally truthful experience of a single event. This intersection creates an authoritative archive of the event while simultaneously offering up nearly infinite accounts of its unfolding.

In order to make response and responsibility necessary to understanding performance photographs, my examples emphasize the layers of witnessing that are visible in any given photograph, once we commit ourselves to looking past that which confirms what we already know. First, I examine *Cut Piece* more closely, particularly in terms of its accompanying film, and then move to a pair of images, including one made by Cindy Sherman, printed in Schneider's *Performing Remains*, in order to think about the ways in which art photographs appear in non-art books. From there, I place *Cut Piece* in conversation with one of its contemporaries: *Rhythm 0* by Marina Abramović. This leads to my consideration of Abramović on her own, with a re-look at the faces recorded during her *The Artist is Present* performance at the Museum of Modern Art in 2010. I then return, one last time, to *Cut Piece*, now through the lens of stillness and substitution, concluding with my own recognition of networked witnessing. Though my examples span the last 60 years, my interest is in how our treatment of them is particularly contemporary, in that I consider the

mediated platforms by which they are accessed. I bring these artworks together not only around Schneider's idea of handling but also around her earlier essay "Solo, Solo, Solo," in which she claims performance as being about a response to a call and a call for response. Both notions contribute to my understanding of what it means to witness photographs, and I ultimately argue that our responsibility as witnesses of the present day is to reject witnessing as a mode of confirmation and instead focus on the task of looking for the unfamiliar.

For the photograph that is endlessly reproduced—as many of the ones I look at in this chapter are—we may still learn from its canonical inclusion if we prioritize looking for the unfamiliar, because that pushes us to examine our own choice to reproduce it. In being attentive to the evidence we use in the doing of art history, we become more attentive to that which we do not use, and therefore to what we omit, which angles we cut away, which voices we silence. Through my own practice of handling different materials, modes, and methods, these case studies converge on my initial questions—In a photograph of a performance, what is lost and what is gained? What might we find hiding in plain sight, if we go looking for the unfamiliar? —in order to examine the ways in which the use of documentary photographs in art history often produces more than it understands. Ultimately, in focusing on the unfamiliar, I expand our methods for using these pieces of historical evidence beyond confirmation—as they are so often used—to instead be about acknowledging the many layers of witnessing they reveal.

Section One – Cutting *Cut Piece*

When I wrote of my experience with the slide identification exam, where "Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964-66" was a potential correct answer, the photograph I was holding in my mind's eye both fits this "correct" categorization and does not. The photograph I am thinking of is from a 1965 performance of *Cut Piece* at Carnegie Hall in New York City (Figure 2). Minoru Niizuma took the photograph, as an artist in his own right. He was a sculptor who moved from Japan to New York in the late 1950s, where he held teaching positions at the Brooklyn Museum Art School and Columbia University.[123] Showing Ono from the back, the composition makes clear that she is seated on a stage, as I see the wood floor of the apron, beyond which there is an auditorium with lights and the faintest presence of bodies in seats. I see the outline of her eye socket and cheek, the bun holding her black hair, her bra straps digging slightly into her shoulders and spreading across her bare back, her left elbow illuminated but her hand in shadow. But from this angle, I cannot see Ono's face; I suppose that I do not quite know that it is Yoko Ono seated here. It is similarly difficult to tell how much of her clothing is left; her bottom half is completely in shadow, providing only a guess that her clothing may be billowing around her waist. She looks straight ahead, while to her left a man kneels down and holds out a piece of cloth, flexing the scissors and seemingly moving them toward her. He is also in shadow, though appears to be wearing a sport jacket or full suit.

[123] There is little available information on Niizuma's life beyond some mentions in museum collections catalogues, though basic details are available in his obituary, which ran in the *New York Times*: "Minoru Niizuma, 67, Sculptor and Teacher," *The New York Times*, September 29, 1998, sec. Arts, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/29/arts/minoru-niizuma-67-sculptor-and-teacher.html.

His features are entirely obscured, other than a mop of hair and a sense of nose. He seems to float, with no body part touching the ground of the stage, compared to Ono, who appears so firmly planted that she casts a long shadow that trails out of the picture frame. Niizuma's photograph shows the audience member readying himself, the fabric, and the scissors for the cut. Niizuma's photograph also shows Ono sitting, staring out into the theater, waiting for the cut.

The rhythms of this photograph—the contrast of light and shadow, the action of the audience member and the stillness of Ono, the scissors not yet in use but about to be—are familiar to me. I recognize and know them through years of encountering this photograph in courses, books, museums, and Internet searches. But when I think of my looking as an interview—an inter-view—I begin to notice something other: I am looking but I cannot catch anyone's gaze; instead, I look at the man and he looks at Ono and Ono looks at the audience and the audience looks at Ono and the man and Niizuma on stage, but not at me.

My perspective changes when I encounter images of *Cut Piece* that are not so engrained that they may float into and out of my mind. Barbara Haskell and John Hanhardt's 1991 book *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects* includes two photographs of *Cut Piece*, both from the 1964 performance in Kyoto, Japan, taken by an unknown photographer.[124] In both, Ono is sitting in varied states of undress as audience members are to her right, scissors close to her body (Figure 4). In the left photograph of the pair, Ono still has on most of her clothing. She is kneeling, sitting back on her heels, with her hands in her lap and her eyes gently closed. A figure in a

[124] Barbara Haskell and John G. Hanhardt, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1991), 90.

sport jacket and pants—a man, I presume—is to her right, holding scissors in order to cut off what looks to be a piece of the top of her skirt suit. Notably, this audience member is also kneeling, making himself almost the same height as Ono. The close crop of the photograph—which does not even expose Ono fully in width and cuts the audience member off at the shoulder, with a glimpse of hip and leg—is an editorial choice made by Haskell and Hanhardt, providing a feeling of intimacy with this action by getting closer to the details of the performance. But even with this level of detail, the dark clothing on both figures dims the picture overall, as the light bounces only off of Ono's face and exposed knees as well as the audience member's hand.

The photograph on the right shows a lot more skin. Framed in a wider angle, Ono is in the same kneeling position but now with eyes open, looking slightly down and to her right. Most of her jacket and some of her skirt have been cut away, exposing a white camisole. A standing audience member, presumably a woman given the short dress and wisp of bangs, bends at the waist to use the scissors to cut off Ono's right jacket sleeve. As she pulls the cloth to cut, Ono's shoulder is exposed. The light hits Ono's face and the right side of her chest and torso along with her knees, her body half illuminated and half in shadow. The audience member also glows: the backs of her bare legs look thin and pale, the entire back of her dress is lit as if there is a spotlight above her, her right arm bent at a ninety degree angle reflects light on top and shadow on bottom, and the brightly glowing right cheek of her face emerges from her armpit as she leans down to cut.

Both photographs privilege Ono as their focus, pairing her with the 90-degree bent right elbows of otherwise obscured audience-members-at-work. Unlike the photo taken at Carnegie Hall, these two images provide no broader sense of the space or the artwork's viewers. What remains consistent across all three is the status of Ono's body: kneeling, forward-facing, eyes closed (perhaps blinking) or looking ahead, a body seemingly without emotion or response. And in the second two, I again cannot make eye contact with the audience members cutting, but I do look at Ono, whose eye I might catch, as I sit with the rest of the audience, maybe next to the photographer. I am now firmly one of them in my position as witness to the "before-and-after" effect brought about by the passage of time within the performance itself.

My change in perspective makes me acutely aware of what I call networked witnessing. One photograph of *Cut Piece* holds so many layers of viewing, happening between and among different apparatuses of looking, that work together to create meaning. Focusing on the layers just *within* the photographs does not even begin to take into account the layers *upon* the photographs. For example, in the pair I have discussed here, their inclusion in Haskell and Hanhardt's text is framed by the overarching title of "**FEMINISM, VIOLENCE, LIBERATION**," which runs across the top of the page in the text (Figure 5).[125] Most broadly, Haskell and Hanhardt's text sought to provide a definitive retrospective of Ono's art practice and its various forms of production up to that point. Their placement of *Cut Piece* within "Feminism: Violence and Liberation" is part of a larger organizational strategy for the book that

[125] Ibid., 90–91.

includes categories such as “Nature: Flux and Transformation,” “Linguistic Paradox,” and “Political Activism.” Their collection includes many photographs (some of which are previously un- or under-published) but few citations, relying primarily on a series of conversations with the artist. The prose is more relaxed and the scholarship draws a great deal from Ono’s biography as well as the authors’ individual impressions. The book draws on multiple sources of evidence—Ono, Haskell and Hanhardt, the artworks, the photographers, the photographs themselves—placing each of these as writers of history, as well as variable methods of authenticating that history—eyewitness accounts, newspaper clippings, exhibition and performances brochures, interviews with Ono, and (again) the photographs themselves.

In doing so, Haskell and Hanhardt’s book served to launch Ono and her work firmly into the academic sphere, with certain interpretations making lasting impressions. Most publications before this date include Ono primarily as a member of Fluxus, which was certainly a significant moment in her oeuvre but not all-encompassing of her practice, which continues into the present. The early 1990s mark a turning point toward a much larger bibliography concerned with Ono in particular (rather than as a group member), with writers such as Gillian Gaar, Jon Hendricks, Alexandra Munroe, Kevin Concannon, and RoseLee Goldberg as well as texts that place Ono’s work and biography at the center of a variety of genres, movements, and styles. Haskell and Hanhardt’s book falls early in this moment, and their interpretation of *Cut Piece*—accomplished as much visually through their page header as it is textually—eventually became quite established.

In his 2008 article on *Cut Piece*, Kevin Concannon notes that "within five years, Haskell and Hanhardt's rather tentative feminist interpretation has become dominant, cropping up regularly in the popular press as well."[126] He traces this shift to *Objects and Arias* specifically, which acknowledges the work as offering "a bold commentary on women" but tells the reader that Ono's works are "far from being strident feminist tracts on the subordination and victimization of women," because they place "responsibility of judgment" onto the viewer.[127] In this feminist reading of the work, Ono manages to avoid stridency by de-centering her own power, thus implicating the audience in the politics of how the piece may unfold. But Concannon notes that within three years, Marcia Tanner was calling the work "fiercely feminist in content" in her catalogue essay for the 1994 exhibition *Bad Girls*, which was organized by the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York and included Janine Antoni, the Guerilla Girls, and Carrie Mae Weems, among others. Even though Tanner traces the origins of *Cut Piece* back to the legend of Buddha (just as Haskell and Hanhardt do), she inserts a feminist reading in stating, "When addressing serious issues—in this case voyeurism, sexual aggression, gender subordination, violation of a woman's personal space, violence against women—Ono invariably found means to combine dangerous confrontation with poetry, spirituality, personal vulnerability, and edgy laughter."[128] Tanner's implication is that the relationship between Ono's choice to give to her audience and the story of the Buddha who also

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[126] Kevin Concannon, "Yoko Ono's Cut Piece: From Text to Performance and Back Again," *Performance Art Journal* 90 (2008): 85.
[127] Haskell and Hanhardt, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects*, 91.
[128] Marcia Tanner, "Mother Laughed: The 'Bad Girls' Avant-Garde," in *Bad Girls*, ed. Marcia Tucker (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994), 61.

gives freely, which is how Ono explained the work during its inception and first performances, is not what is "serious" about the work (a position that simultaneously affirms Ono's status as "Oriental" other while also dismissing this identity as less important); rather, such parallels are merely aids to address more important issues. Ono acknowledges such a "fiercely feminist" interpretation now, as it has become the most common lens through which art historians think, talk, and teach about *Cut Piece*. Significantly, the strident alignment of *Cut Piece* with feminism primarily through the interpretations of violation of woman's personal space and violence against women ignores the fact that the script for the work allows for the performer to be a man or a woman:

> *Cut Piece*
> First version for single performer:
> Performer sits on the stage with a pair of scissors in front of him.
> It is announced that members of the audience may come on stage—one at a time—to cut a small piece of the performer's clothing to take with them.
> Performer remains motionless throughout the piece.
> Piece ends at the performer's option.[129]

Of course, *Cut Piece* can still be a feminist work with a man performing the role typically historically assigned to Ono, because the heart of the work—the performer's passivity, the responsibility of choosing to be a participating audience member, the exchange that happens through scissors and cloth—remains. This becomes more obvious when we consider later performances of *Cut Piece*, including the one offered by Ono in 2003 at Paris's Théâtre le Ranelagh, which was intentionally about forging the interaction of touch and giving as about world

[129] Concannon, "Yoko Ono's Cut Piece: From Text to Performance and Back Again," 82.

peace.[130] Thus, a feminist reading of *Cut Piece* can and should certainly be about gender subordination or violence against women, but it need not be *only* about that. To understand the responsibilities of exchange as themselves feminist is an equally if not more interesting task.

This type of feminist reading also engages the many forms of witnessing that are happening within the work and its documentation. When I look at the photographs of *Cut Piece*, I do see Ono sitting nearly half-naked with men, taller and anonymous as they move from shadows, wielding scissors over her body. I feel the threat to her body. I also see her body, unflinching and unscathed. And, when I look at or picture Niizuma's image in Carnegie Hall, I see the photographer, so close to the action that any harm that could come to Ono might similarly befall him. I also see the audience, as witness to the entire event. Ono is watching them, perhaps judging them, having made an invitation for participation. Perhaps distressed about being the subjects of such a gaze, or unsettled by her willful stillness, certain audience members act. Still others do not, witnesses as much to Ono's stillness as they are to the photographer's movement. The event everyone is witnessing is not just Ono but this entire network of looking, action, and inaction.

Photographs showing audience members willingly and willfully cutting Ono's clothing appear frequently in texts, presentations, and museum contexts, but Ono has shared throughout her career that audience responses to works like *Cut Piece* were quite varied and inherently complicated, often including long pauses or

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[130] Peggy Phelan, "The Return of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80," in *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2007), 350.

indications of discomfort. According to her, Buddhist practice especially influenced the reception of *Cut Piece* in Japan, where she notes, "It was very, very difficult for people to come up. So there would be very long silences and then you would hear the scissors cutting. There were quiet and beautiful silences—quiet and beautiful movements."[131] Ono's attention to the very sound of the scissors indicates the significance of cutting as an action within the work. Ono actually developed a number of events between 1962 and 1964 that employed the verb "to decide," derived from the Latin *decidere*, which most literally means, "to cut."[132] Art historian Kristine Stiles, who has a long interest in feminist performance art and written about Ono's work on a number of occasions, including in the *Yes Yoko Ono* catalogue, considers cutting to be an integral aspect of the artist's work, as to "cut presupposes a material thing into which one might cleave or make an incision, or trim something off, away, or from the real, and is therefore often associated with pain."[133] Stiles considers cutting as a method of removal or separation, with an emphasis on the result of a painful reality or realization. But cut has other meanings as well, some not so harsh as the ones Stiles evokes. My initial interest in "the cut" comes logically out of Yoko Ono's own performance practice, though I wish to think about it across

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[131] Haskell and Hanhardt, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects*, 91. Kristine Stiles' also includes a threatening story from the Kyoto performance: "a man came on stage and raised the scissors over Ono's head, threatening her for a long time as if ready to stab her. Ono's response was dismay rather than fear, for his gesture made her action more theatrical than she intended, a theatricality she avoided by suppressing her emotions and not reacting." See Kristine Stiles, "Being Undyed: The Meeting of the Mind and Matter in Yoko Ono's Events" in *Yes Yoko Ono* (158).
[132] Ming-Yuen S Ma, "ReCut Project," in *Perform, Repeat, Record : Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect, 2012), 348.
[133] Alexandra Munroe, ed., *Yes Yoko Ono* (New York: Japan Society and Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 147.

various examples presented here. Cutting has clear associations to removal and pain, but these are not its only associations. When something moves us directly and without distraction, we say it cuts to the heart. When we have worked hard on something, we receive our cut of the benefits. When we are making a film (either actual or in our minds), we cut together the most important scenes. And when we are not quite sure how to feel about something because it has both favorable and unfavorable aspects, we will likely say that it cuts both ways. Embracing the variety of meanings of cutting encourages various possibilities for the meaning of the work itself while drawing attention to the edited state of the photographs as documentation.

The photographs of *Cut Piece* are themselves literally cut in that they are cropped as well as singularly chosen out of multiple frames, but also more figuratively, by narrowing my field of vision, focusing me on one thing while implicitly and silently editing out other elements. As a historian, I cut up the already-happened for better examination. In the case of *Cut Piece*, I can use such scraps as Ono clutching and covering her breasts, the concept of threat, and the proximity of male audience members as clear-"cut" evidence in support of a feminist reading, while the long pauses between audience participants taking the stage can be simultaneously edited out, left on the cutting room floor.

Indeed, this is exactly the case in the film made by Albert and David Maysles of the 1965 iteration of *Cut Piece* performed at Carnegie Hall. The Maysles brothers worked together on over 30 films as directors and producers, primarily in the documentary style and with artists and musicians as frequent subjects. Released in

1966, their 16 mm film of *Cut Piece* is eight minutes long, black and white, and includes sound. But as Concannon notes, the film was not widely shown until 30 years after its release, when it appeared as part of the *Out of Actions* exhibition program at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art in 1998, after which analysis of it begins to appear regularly in texts about Ono's work.[134] It is described by Maysles Films, Inc. as follows: "Ono sits motionless on the stage after inviting the audience to come up and cut away her clothing in a denouement of the reciprocity between victim and assailant."[135] This is not language created by Ono, or at least it is not used by her elsewhere or attributed to her on the Maysles' website. Their reading of the film as a climax within a chain of events, particularly events between a victim and her assailants, makes clear the normalization of reading the work as about violence against women, even though the use of "victim" here does not imply any urgency for intervention on behalf of those witnessing. Calling *Cut Piece* "a denouement of…reciprocity" seems closer to Ono's original intentions of the work being about gift giving, a thoughtful exchange between her and members of her audience. But the seemingly casual reference to victims and assailants, all through the lens of "movie" language (as a denouement is typically specific to a film narrative of some sort) belies the comfortable loop of the film in the present day, where Ono is continuously threatened without those actions being construed as threatening by present-day viewers.

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[134] Concannon, "Yoko Ono's Cut Piece: From Text to Performance and Back Again," 91.

[135] As described on the Maysles archival website, available here: http://mayslesfilms.com/film/cut-piece/. Both Maysles Films, Inc. and Yoko Ono retain distribution and rights of the film.

Throughout its eight minutes, *Cut Piece* the film zooms in and out of elements of the performance: Ono's face, Ono's legs, the scissors. While wider shots include participants, making them recognizable, the film does not provide close-ups of their faces or bodies; occasionally, their hands are the focus, as they cut. In listening to the film, we hear smatterings of sound—claps, laughter, the thud or click of shoes on the hardwood stage, one male participant joking that "this might take some time" as he cuts away Ono's undershirt and a woman in front of the stage commenting that he's perhaps "getting carried away"—but the audience as a whole remains dark, obscured in the shadows of the auditorium behind the photographer. In this self-conscious revealing of the camera operator's gaze, the Maysles draw viewers' attention not to the participants as individuals, but rather to the elements of the performance that are essential to Ono's script, using her body—specifically her face—as the center on the vanishing point for the film.

Keeping in mind the many mediations of *Cut Piece*—Ono's early insistence that the work is about the story of the Buddha as gift-giver, the original script allowing for both men and women to perform the work (and the many instances in which men have performed it), and the delayed public appearance of the film—I return to Julia Bryan-Wilson's writing on Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*. In her essay "Remembering Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*," Bryan-Wilson traces the way in which one specific reading—in this case, the reading of *Cut Piece* as definitively about submission and violence against women—may develop and ultimately color the entire historicization of an artwork. Bryan-Wilson asserts, "These statements [by which she means those casting *Cut Piece* to be about sexuality and violence],

motored by theories of feminine submission and masculine domination, implicate the audience in a series of escalating transactions, from voyeurism to physical harm, and present the audience as menacing, terroristic, and compassionless. There is little possibility in these interpretations that the invitation Ono proffers might be positive…."[136] Bryan-Wilson does not discard the feminist reading that engages ideas of submission or violence, but insists that this cannot be the only reading produced among art historians. And again, in going back to the images themselves, there are certainly other interpretations available.

Yet, for Bryan-Wilson, such a reading is particularly "motored" precisely by the widely circulated photographs of the performance, often used by art historians negatively to implicate the audience by cutting out the long pauses between participants actually taking the stage to cut Ono's clothes.[137] She also points to the idea that the work, as a score, facilitates re-workings and recurrences that are integrally connected to the documentation, since "with the piece captured on film, Ono ensured that the live event could be strung together later in a series of shots or watched in its entirety, thus replayed again and again."[138] Significantly, she additionally situates this reading in specific relationship to the documentation of *Cut Piece*, as it simultaneously reveals (Ono, breasts, a man, scissors) and conceals (the long pauses between audience participants) certain elements that drive its interpretation. Bryan-Wilson's observation demonstrates not only that the photographs do indeed cut away quite a bit of the action, sometimes even the

[136] Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," 103.
[137] Ibid., 106.
[138] Ibid.

presence of the photographers and cameramen, but also that *Cut Piece*-on-film was a conscious part of the work from the beginning. As the photographs of the performance match those perspectives of the film strip—indeed, I see that these cameramen are in the same places at the same times—and then these photographs are reproduced over and over (in textbooks and scholarly articles and museums and indeed on every Internet search one could perform in order to learn about Ono and *Cut Piece*), they create a loop as well that gives the impression of isolation and duration.

Cut Piece as a film has distinct cuts as well, where either Albert or David releases the camera in order to change out the film roll. At each cut, one of the brothers marks the break by saying "That was number one," etc. When my gaze is aligned with that of their camera's, my perspective has forcibly shifted each time, from the front row of the theater trained on Ono to onstage just behind and beside Ono (so partially interfering with the audience's uninterrupted view of the performance) to back in front. The state of Ono's clothing changes, as well, as key cuts of the scissors are cut from the film. Sound goes in and out. Other cameramen appear and disappear in the frame. In watching the film on a loop in gallery settings, eight minutes becomes a lifetime of passivity for Ono, where audience members never stop coming on stage and her clothes cannot manage to stay intact. In the situation, Ono and the audience and the cameramen and present-day viewers never stop witnessing the event.[139] *Cut Piece* becomes a matter of repetition: nervous

[139] When the film of *Cut Piece* was shown at the Museum of Modern Art's 2015 retrospective of Yoko Ono, entitled *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960-1971*, it was somewhat awkwardly located in a gallery nook between a live performance of *Bag*

laughter, Ono's wet eyes, a male participant smirking and delivering "this might take some time" right to the camera, the film cutting out. A seemingly endless loop of violence, feminism, liberation. As present-day viewers watching the loop, we not only hear the sounds of Carnegie Hall—including "this might take some time" —but also the hum of the projector. Bryan-Wilson's motored theories become literal here, as we become aware of the technology that simultaneously moves Ono into our own time while confining her to the Carnegie Hall stage.

But when we look for what we might not already know, we may see and hear differently. In watching the film over and again, I notice that it begins with the performance underway, and in fact, we do not see Ono at first, as she is entirely obscured when seated behind an audience participant kneeling to cut. The third reel in the film begins this way as well, with Ono seated and not fully visible. In fact, we do not see her face for most of the film; the Maysles zoom in on parts of her body as an audience member cuts, or the scissors left on the floor next to her hand, or show her from the back and side. This is contrasted with close zooms into Ono's face but bisected, where a single feature sometimes fills the entire frame as Ono works to look straight ahead, with eyes open and mouth in a flat line. Jones calls the participants in New York "menacing and rowdy" (indeed, we hear lots of laughter and talking) compared to other iterations of the performance, a conclusion she

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Piece—initiated several times a day by MoMA staff as well as exhibition viewers, who were invited by the posted instructions to participate—and a gallery dedicated Ono's "Touch Poem for Group of People," which at the museum translated into a room with instructions for visitors to "Touch Each Other." The museum's choice to put exhibition attendees in these performative roles further emphasized the inescapable loop of *Cut Piece*, endorsing the film as iconic and unrepeatable rather than as malleable as the other works, with the climax forever centered on Ono's own nearly-stripped body.

draws from the film as it shows a constant parade of participants, including the man who comments about how "this might take some time" while he cuts away Ono's undershirt.[140] I don't disagree with Phelan that this exchange feels particularly misogynistic, though I am struck by the fact that in this menacing moment, Ono gestures as if to help him, including adjusting the position of her arm and loosening the strap on her left shoulder. She also moves her eyes and head quite a bit, responding directly to the presence of another human being onstage in proximity to her. To capture this and other exchanges, the cameramen get as close to her as the audience participants do, responding directly to their actions; at one point, one of the Maysles brothers is onstage and circling around Ono, mirroring the moves of the current participant. This reminds me that the invitation to join Ono onstage was not in fact about violating her space, but instead about marking your own presence—through taking a piece of cloth but also through appearing in the documentation—in a way that goes beyond simply sitting in the auditorium and watching.

My ability to watch the film again and again, aware of my subjectivity and mediated knowledge even as I look for the unfamiliar, is the difference between being an eyewitness and being a witness. Despite my ability to witness the film *Cut Piece*, I cannot place myself in Ono's audience. Gavin Butt writes about this difference in his essay "Happenings in History, or, the Epistemology of the Memoir," in which he discusses Samuel Delany's record of a performance by Allan Kaprow. Butt states, "Though providing a compelling narrative of what it was like to be at a happening, I hesitate to use the term 'eyewitness' to describe [Delany's] account

[140] Phelan, "The Return of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80," 352.

here because…it is the *limitations* which Kaprow's work presents to optical appreciation which most preoccupies Delany."[141] While Butt is making a direct connection to the viewing limitations built into Kaprow's design and performance of the work, I emphasize the word here in order to point to a larger idea of limitations expressed by Butt: "that happenings are 'known of' and not 'known', and that they are so 'only through their dispersed traces: hearsay and gossip, reminiscence, a few photographs, and documents.'"[142] Butt sets up, then, a difference between story-telling (narratives such as the one provided by Delany) and traces (photographs and documents), stating, "These narratives *are* the ways in which [happenings] are repetitively re-enacted and through which they come to be 'known-of', even if not fully 'known.'"[143]

In the case of my experience with *Cut Piece*, my known-of is made up of both stories and traces, with the acknowledgement that even to its contemporary audience, the work was not fully known. My responsibility for knowledge-making, then, is not only to the artist and the work but also the stories and the traces, as Jones acknowledges in the statement previously shared, "[w]hile the live situation may enable the phenomenological relations of flesh-to-flesh engagement, the documentary exchange (viewer/reader ←→ document) is equally intersubjective," because all performances and historical evidence meet viewers/readers where they

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[141] Butt, "Happenings in History, Or, the Epistemology of the Memoir," 116. Emphasis added.
[142] Ibid., 123. For further reference, see: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Judith F. Rodenbeck, *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Warrs - Events, Objects, Documents* (Wallach Art Gallery: New York, 1999).
[143] Ibid.

are at, just as we bring our knowledge to these sources.[144] This is a matter, again, of handling; my physical and scholarly handling of performance photographs is about engagement and certainly about my own subjectivity. While I myself am still, sitting passively in a darkened museum corner, I watch the act of cutting Ono's clothes makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand, later making me think of the violence of history: it is not the performance or its participants but rather historicization itself that keeps Ono running on this significantly edited but undisturbed loop.

But I think again about the photographs and the film in terms of response and responsibility. By acknowledging the networked witnessing that such documentation makes visible, it is possible to understand these objects as not purposefully offering only confirmation or validation of my own interpretation. Instead, the loop can belong to Ono, creating a world in which the performer truly "remains motionless throughout the piece," as her aspirational instructions for *Cut Piece* first proposed. This network of witnesses recognizes her presence across time and space by registering what we can see. In that way, documentation of *Cut Piece* not only fulfills Ono's original instructions but also perhaps overlaps with and extends another of Ono's works, *Audience Piece* (Figure 6), in which performers concluded an evening by coming out onto stage and each watching a different member of the audience until that "target" averted his or her eyes, with no end in sight.[145] Or maybe such a loop could usefully remind us of Ono's *Collecting Piece II*[146] from the spring of 1963:

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[144] Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," 12.
[145] Stiles, "Being Undyed: The Meeting of the Mind and Matter in Yoko Ono's Events," 151.

Put a person on the stage.
Examine the person as follows in all possible detail.

1. Weigh
2. Measure
3. Count
4. Question
5. Dismember
6. Burn
7. Record

[146] As printed in: Yoko Ono and John Lennon, *Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings by Yoko Ono* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

Section Two – Faux Fingers

In terms of art historical attention in the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st, Amelia Jones may have said it best: "Much ink has been spilled over Cindy Sherman."[147] Like Jones does in her essay for the Cindy Sherman *Retrospective* exhibition catalogue, I too want to avoid "attempting to deliver yet another, final, definitive interpretation of Cindy Sherman's work."[148] Instead, my aim in this section is to think about Sherman in the context of Rebecca Schneider's 2011 book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, primarily because Schneider chooses to include in her examination of reenacting as a performative historical document an image from Sherman's lesser discussed 1991 *Civil War Series* (which, for one example, is entirely left out of the retrospective exhibition and catalogue that houses Jones' essay). Perhaps this lack of attention is because the images in the *Civil War Series* do not fit so easily into the ways in which Sherman's images are often read through many important concepts to gender and queer studies: gender as performance, the male gaze, authorship, and tropes. Instead of costumes or sex, the photographs are explicit in showing fingers or feet seemingly left for dead amidst dirt and grass. They zoom in closely on particular parts of the body (and in fact, these parts are artificial, not Sherman's) that—because of the disconnection from other markers—seem to lack specificity entirely, rather than offering a larger perspective on what it means to be a woman.

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[147] Amelia Jones, "Tracing the Subject with Cindy Sherman," in *Cindy Sherman: Retrospective* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1997), 33.
[148] Ibid.

Most art historical writing on Sherman traces her work in direct relationship to the performance of the actress and the performance of gender, through Sherman notes that the initial and most famous series—the *Untitled Film* Stills—is less about feminist theory and more about the roles women can play, noting that there "are so many levels of artifice."[149] Abigail Solomon-Godeau uses artifice to explain Sherman's artistic extension of first-wave feminism, in which Sherman's photographs are positioned in relationship to performance and body art practices of the 1960s in being about "programmatic demonstration that femininity is performative."[150] But this is not just about the roles of femininity or the fact that Sherman is literally in costume in her photographs; Sherman's pictures anticipate an audience and their potential connections, performing for the camera and the as-yet-unknown viewer. Jones reads this phenomenologically in her essay included in the catalogue for the late-1990s Cindy Sherman exhibition *Retrospective*, which toured internationally and also included essays by Amanda Cruz and Elizabeth A. T. Smith. Jones offers a more personal reading of Sherman's work, noting this approach as an alternative to the copious amounts of art history dedicated to explaining and interpreting Sherman's images. She argues that when the photographs are positioned with feminist phenomenology, they "can be seen to encourage an opening of the viewer/artist relation such that the viewer (or, more accurately, participant) 'turns inside out,' experiencing her investments and desires relative to

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[149] Cindy Sherman, "The Making of *Untitled*," in *Cindy Sherman: The Complete Untitled Film Stills* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2003), 9.
[150] Solomon-Godeau, "The Woman Who Never Was: Self-Representation, Photography, and First-Wave Feminist Art," 340.

the figures enacted in Sherman's work."[151] My emphasis here is to imagine Sherman's photographs as soliciting participants, in that they are as much about viewer interaction with performing as they are about Sherman herself performing, and thus they may take a logical place in a history of feminist performance art.

The image from the *Civil War Series* that Schneider discusses in her book, *Untitled #242*, is composed around a bloated-looking upturned hand, the fingers curling toward a palm that is partially concealed by dirt and blades of grass (Figure 7). The left hand looks waxy and heavy, almost too regular in the curl of its fingers to be real, as it is surrounded by ground that appears torn up and worn down. It is the largest element in the mural-sized color photograph, which is 49 by 72 inches. Yet even with its size, the colors are so muted—deep reds staining the ground, grass that has dried to yellow shards, skin that is a transparent-blue where it reflects the light—that the whole image feels particularly creepy. Even know that the body part here is artificial, one wonders about the arm that splays out past such a hand, connected to a body that has been left to the earth, weighing down until it itself becomes the finely churned red dirt of war.

As a scholar of performance studies rather than art history, Schneider's book aims to think about the many ways in which bodies are in performance, including a chapter on performance in photography, where she looks closely at artworks made by Sherman and Yasumasa Morimura. Her assessment of these works to be about the gendered actress as performer is paired with considerations of photographs of live theater as well as less intentionally artistic pursuits, including the photographs

[151] Jones, "Tracing the Subject with Cindy Sherman," 33.

taken during the torture scenarios of Abu Ghraib. About the *Civil War Series*, Schneider says that Sherman's images are focused on a "body [that] is increasingly distorted," with photographs of "faux corpses, mostly feet and fingers that one reads (because of her earlier work) as Sherman's own (whether they are or are not), intermingled with dirt either as if decomposing on the battlefield or trying to scratch up out of it." Schneider's interest in Sherman is rooted in the idea that her photographs, including those in her *Civil War Series*, "mimic not-quite-precise precedents;" rather, they are reenactments that are recognizable to a viewer as related to the past, even if that viewer cannot place them firmly within history. The value of such work, for Schneider, is that the photograph becomes not just a record but also a performance itself, because the photograph offers the reenactment to the viewer. Her work on Sherman is done in order to explain a primary argument of her writing: "we persist in parsing our mediums according to decidability: privileging remains-indicating-absence for photography *on the one hand* and presence-as-vanishing-liveness for performance *on the other*."[152]

A focus of reenactment as central to understanding photography and performance is not just about Sherman's *Civil War*; it is also about Schneider's. Much of *Performing Remains* recounts her attendance at several Civil War reenactments, which she does in order to enter into further discussion about the ways in which reenactments are about how we personally remember or socially conceive of history. She begins with a quotation from a Civil War reenactor, who tells her during the course of her field research, "The Civil War isn't over, and that's why we fight.

[152] Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, 157.

We fight to keep the past alive."[153] From that point forward, Schneider's work is purposefully cast within this fraught idea that the past could somehow be or come alive, that there is a particular past to be revived, and that some but not all may access it. The reenactor who gives Schneider her epigraph is reminiscent of Lisa Saltzman's recount of the origins of painting and sculpture: "that mythic moment when imminent loss drives the impulse to record and remember. A body, soon to be borne off by the forces of history, into war, into exile, if not also into death, is commemorated through a sequence of decidedly visual strategies and inventions."[154] There is an impulse as well as a desire to fight to keep the past present, as if the archiving has indeed been done but that something is lost in that process. And certainly, these offerings by reenactors are made with a live audience (not the archive) in mind.

Schneider's book weaves together reenactors' testimony in the form of interviews and anecdotes as well as photographs, which are intended to provide supporting evidence throughout the text. Many of these are Schneider's own takes, recorded and developed as part of her field research and then subsequently tied to discussions of the commitment of reenactors to authentic circumstances. I want to focus briefly on the first example of photographs as evidence in Schneider's writing about the Civil War, in order to prompt critical thinking about uses of photographs in historical and theoretical writing. Here, one image appears directly above another to take up an entire page in the text (Figure 8). Both photographs show groups of

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[153] Ibid., 32.
[154] Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, 2.

men in white coats, stained with red, leaning over stripped soldiers whose chests and stomachs provide a surface on which saws and scalpels rest. The men seem engrossed in the bodies, attending to a hand in one and a foot in the other. These extremities are wrapped in gauze and also doused in red, as their owners seem to otherwise lie still. The caption to the photographs reads: "Contemporary professional doctors who are also reenactors, reenacting surgical procedures at the Civil War Reenactment Field Hospital at Hearthside Homestead, Lincoln, RI. Photos: Hearthside Homestead."[155] The photographs are full of information but in fact only loosely imply surgical procedures (both because actual surgeries would not take place at such events and because the photographs do not show any cutting or other surgical actions), but there are other indicators a hospital: the bloodied white coats (doused with fake blood), patients lying on tables (not really injured, or at least not by this fake battle), a Confederate general's hat (on the head of a reenactor who may or may not be a Confederate). The photographs are rich with performance and re-performance, real and fake, present and past, but they go un-discussed in Schneider's text. They are illustrations—acting as supplements to other information—and therefore seemingly singular in their possible interpretation or meaning. For Schneider, these photographs show what they show. Or put another way, they indisputably show what she says they show. Textually, Schneider explains the complexity of Civil War reenactment and how its various roles, time tables, and activities lead to a crossing over and touching of times and bodies that are logically quite distant or disparate. Visually, the included photographs illustrate this idea, as

[155] Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, 34.

readers make a connection to real doctors in the present who become fake doctors in the past. Readers are led to this connection by the framing of the images, where Schneider relies on an understanding of photographs as illustrative and captions as demonstrative.

Here, we might helpfully think of Linda Nochlin's arguments about realism in her pivotal text on the subject, which asserted that the Realism movement was not about mirroring everyday life or reality, but that—just as in any style or movement—the artist's depiction of the visible world into the art object is always a matter of transformation that is particular to the medium.[156] Unlike the contemporary, about which Nochlin states that we relatively in agreement about the lack of fixed correlation between the universe and the media we use to describe the universe, in the mid-19th century, both artists and scientists were reveling in nearly constant moments of discovery about the world. The doctors in Schneider's photographs are of both times: the present, with its seemingly limitless complexity in the impossibility of knowing, and the past, with its seemingly limitless capacity to know. In reenacting the past and acting in the present, the realism of these doctors does become a matter of transformation. About such an image, Nochlin would encourage us not to take it at "face value" or even to see it only within our own contemporary, but instead to grapple with its realist complexities. To do so means to see the doctors and patients and Schneider-as-photographer as both reenactors of the past and actors of the present, able to occupy multiple positions in relationship to history at one time. In my own looking, then, I cannot privilege what

[156] See: Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971).

I already know, which is what Schneider tells me: that these are doctors posing as Civil War reenactors. Instead, I see that their discoveries about how to realistically perform mid-19th century surgical procedures fully parallel the discoveries of the doctors of that time. Thus, the contemporary doctors are not reenacting at all; they are genuinely acting, and their actions are particular to this time. In my own enacting of a practice of inter-viewing, I become aware of the multiple and multi-model types of viewing happening in just this one photograph.

Reenacting—here, perhaps another word for inter-viewing—my own looking forces a reckoning of the power of framing devices. Captions often masquerade as straightforward explanations that provide citation information, but the more subtle work they do is to indicate to readers what the author considers the most important elements of the image, or even what the author considers obvious to the imagined audience of her own writing. Captions are in some ways a manifestation of how photographs bear the brunt of art history's disciplinary need to produce, rely on, and interrogate images simultaneously; they are always under consideration and speculation even when used as evidence. The framing of a photograph is thus central to its interpreted meaning, as art historian John Tagg asserts in his 2009 book *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's notion that the frame "gives rise to the work," Tagg notes that a frame operates as an "instrumental regime…determining what is interior to it and what is exterior, what is internal evidence and what is background, what is text and what is context,

what is structure and what is history."[157] We can think quite literally of a frame here: that wooden structure so often painted in gold confines the painting to the painting and defines it in opposition to the wall on which it hangs. But the literal is also theoretical: the frame functions to provide definition and thereby shape understanding. In a photograph, the frame is simultaneously visible and invisible, as we can perceive the boundaries of the image even without a physical structure to force us to do so. For Tagg, this creates a subsequent blurriness in how we perceive photographs, in that the "frame thus stands out against the two grounds that it constitutes—the work and the setting—and yet, with respect to each of these, it always dissolves into the other."[158]

To trace more precisely how this works, Tagg follows an image that has undergone what he calls the "*habits* of art history" (not unlike Margaret Olin's notion of the *habitus* of photographs, which considers the socialized knowledge we apply to taking, posing for, and looking at images). By utilizing "habits," Tagg means that an image has been situated, or paired, with the name of an artist, a title, a date, a location.[159] Though these are all "familiar" distinctions—indeed, my chapter begin with this concept as applied in the slide identification exam—he uses such distinctions to interrogate what we mean by framing, stating "if such framing marks the beginning, then [the image] began before I started to speak and was in place or, better perhaps, described a place in which the work might find itself and be found;"

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[157] John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 235.
[158] Ibid., 246.
[159] Ibid., 240.

in conclusion, "such a frame was always already there in advance."[160] Tagg's assertion of the always already makes obvious that when we start to think or write about images, we do not start with nothing. This non-nothing-ness is a kind of burden in itself. The burden of representation identified by Tagg is not unlike the burden art history places on photographs as evidentiary. Photographs find themselves as manipulated objects in an endless loop by which they historicize and are historicized.

To think back on the famous Bayard photograph, he draws attention to the power of framing through captions by creating a scenario in which one simply cannot look (at the caption) and see (the photograph) at the same time. And of course, one cannot be both drowned man and photographer of drowned man, as Bayard's image purports to do. Amelia Jones points to the complexity of such a status as "the major impetus to the development of photographic technologies: the desire for the image to render up the body *and thereby the self* in its fullness and truth."[161] By this, Jones means that photography seemingly promised to offer not only a lasting picture of what was there, but also a sense of what was really there—something that you could hold onto. In doing so, Jones speculates that the "photograph promised to return the represented body to some kind of authentic state,"[162] even as a faux-dead Bayard mourns the loss of his designation as the inventor of photography even though he can, very impressively, take a photograph of his dead self. Bayard's loss, then, is not a death of the body but a death within

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (London: Routledge, 2006), xiv.
[162] Ibid., xiv.

history, his name forever replaced by Daguerre, his self-portrait un-viewable as the caption extols the action of handling a photograph, and thus handling authentic evidence of the past. For both Bayard and Schneider, it is a matter of (fake) corpses making history come alive, neither contemporary with 1840s Bayard, who would live to see the real Civil War, or 2010s Schneider, who lives to see the reenacted one.

According to Schneider, Sherman is as much engaging in "living history" in her *Civil War Series* as the Civil War reenactors, in that both do their work with an understanding that "there is no precise original but a reenactment of scenes that might have been."[163] This is why Schneider includes Sherman's *Untitled #242* in her book, as it in many ways exemplifies her larger point that reenactment is not only, or fully, about the original, but instead focused on an experience of the present that accounts in some way for the past. Such a comparison is made not only in words, but also in pictures. *Untitled #242* is printed at the top of page 156 of *Performing Remains*, on the left side of the book fold, in black and white and measuring approximately 4.5 by 3.5 inches. If one flips back 100 pages in Schneider's text, there is a very similar image, also on the top left of the fold and otherwise identical in placement on the page and size. This photograph (Figure 9) is what Schneider refers to as the "faux finger."[164] The "faux finger," a designation provided by image caption—"Faux finger. Chase Farm Civil War reenactment, Lincoln, RI. June 4, 2005. Photo: Rebecca Schneider."—is a reenactment prop left on the battlefield. Schneider recounts how she came upon the finger and could not shake its associations,

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[163] Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, 154.
[164] Ibid., 52.

ultimately driven to photograph it herself. Her concern is over several things: the prop's role in the fake surgeries performed by real and/or fake doctors (alluding to the previously discussed photographs), the literal digital captured by the technological digital, the physical and theoretical pointing to the real (the losses of the Civil War, and those absences marked by reenactors) by the fake (the industry of war reenactment, and the presence of its accoutrements). She writes, "To tell it like it happened, I ended up sitting on the ground beside the bloody point, contemplating its farcical detrital gesture for quite some time."[165] Schneider was so enchanted by this image that she even chose it for the cover of her book, stating, "A digital image of this encounter now graces the paperback cover of this book as if to *point*, troubled index, at the trace of the future of the past."[166] This photograph, remarkably similar to the one produced by Sherman twenty years earlier, is evidence of what Schneider *saw*. It is also evidence of *her* seeing, her own act of witnessing, her commitment to telling it like it happened.

Schneider's book is not art history, but it is full of images.[167] Photographs are not only integrally important to Schneider's narrative and arguments within *Performing Remains*, but they are also intentional supplements to her own memory. In the same way that reenactors substitute the bodies of those lost, and thereby make those memories matter (as Lisa Saltzman proposes), Schneider's photographs record the absence of those lost as well as her own presence. In writing about how

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., 51.
[167] Thanks to Jane Blocker for making this idea explicit in her observation: "these days, every book looks like art history."

one might approach history with a particular interest in a temporality that takes into account both absence and presence, she states,

> To find the past resident in remains—material evidence, haunting trace, reiterative gesture—is to engage one time resident *in* another time—a logic rooted in the word 'remain.' Time, engaged *in* time, is always a matter of crossing, or passing, or body touching, and perhaps always (at least) double. In the two examples above (the body accessing material in an archive and the body as an archive of material that might be accessed), the past is given to remain, but in each case that remaining is incomplete, fractured, partial—in the sense both of fragmentary and ongoing. Such remaining also presumes a threat, a site of contestation, a fight. In the archive, the fight is a battle to preserve the past in its material traces against the 'archiviolithic' that it might disappear. Such preservation is pitched toward a future in which the past might be engaged in a future present as a site of concern—recalling Benjamin's famous aphoristic claim that 'every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.'[168]

While I do not disagree with Schneider's view that the obsession with the archive is fed by both material and immaterial concerns over preservation of both the immaterial and the material, I believe this passage is indicative of Schneider's own slippage between what constitutes materiality and immateriality. Schneider's own snapshots, published alongside artworks, reveal that the desire to preserve might go unchecked by either the body or temporality. Her field notes, description, and memory are not enough. Through images, she herself is fighting to keep the past alive, because the past provides evidence of her present. Time is double, then, as she says above, in that the faux finger is both of and representative of the body, accessed in Schneider's archive while also itself archiving the action on the battlefield, then repeated (both visually and figuratively) by Sherman's fingers, both of and not of a

[168] Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, 37.

body, meant to evoke both Sherman's hand and an anonymous hand, in the past and the present. By looking closely at both of these photographs, I learn that even images that *appear* to be so alike may not be at all. If Schneider prompts a viewer/reader to think about how images can be clear-cut evidence of the "that-which-happened"—telling it like it is, so to speak—even in the context of shifting bodily presence and temporality, then her inclusion of Sherman *points* me to the conclusion that how photographs move between being evidence and being art is not so much about their production elements, but instead about the frame of their surrounding context.

In order to understand the relationship of these two photographs to each other as something other than that they appear in the same book, I need to inter-view them: hold them up together in my mind's eye, reveal that Sherman and Schneider are not a confirming dyad but instead challenge each other (even if unintentionally), and attend to their individual and overlapping platforms. I learn that Sherman is (and art historians are) not the only one who can tell us about the meaning of her work, and that Schneider can tell us about it in certain ways without even meaning to, and I do so by literally flipping through the book's pages. In intention, Sherman's photograph has nothing to do with Schneider's own, but Schneider's choice to bring them together through the topic of "living history" makes handling—my hands in action because of these other hands—something that keeps the past alive.

Section Three – Wild Pictures

When *Cut Piece* was performed in London as part of the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium, Yoko Ono felt that the scene got especially "wild"—her word.[169] In the interview in which she discusses this, she does not fully explain what happened or what might have prompted such a reaction from this audience in particular (though multiple days of artworks dedicated to destruction might have helped). However, she does imply that the wildness was at least in part due to the presence of multiple cameras.[170] This is an odd explanation, given that cameras were present at every iteration of *Cut Piece* as well as at many of Ono's performances of other works. So, why would she think that cameras in this one case caused things to get so "wild"?

Ono does not discuss this comment further in any other interviews or writing, so we do not have any evidence to help us privilege her explanation of this impression. But Julia Bryan-Wilson, in writing about *Cut Piece*, does speculate on the power of the camera at Ono's performances. In discussing what she identifies as the often "overlooked" presence of photographers and filmmakers, Bryan-Wilson seeks to explain the work of these bodies as going beyond mere recording. She asserts that the "eye of the camera, with its reassuring presence, not only acted as an extra witness to the audience participation, but also authorised the actions on stage."[171] Bryan-Wilson's identification of the camera as an extra witness relates to my

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[169] Stiles, "Being Undyed: The Meeting of the Mind and Matter in Yoko Ono's Events," 158. The Destruction in Art Symposium was held in London in September of 1966 at the Africa Centre, and was organized by Gustav Metzger to include performances, events, and Happenings all throughout London.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," 106.

definition of networked witnessing, in which there are multiple stances and layers of witnessing for any given performance or photograph. Furthermore, her proposal that this is extra layer of witnessing is what authorized the actions onstage implies that the act of witnessing is primarily about validation and confirmation. Not those filming and photographing such avant-garde artworks specifically, but instead the presence of cameras themselves becomes "reassuring," in that such a presence implies that nothing would truly go wrong if all participants were captured on film. It is the filming that makes such audience participants accountable for their actions into the future, because the camera provides evidence of that which happened, thus reminding us to only do the things that we would feel comfortable looking at for the rest of our lives.

Of course, there are many exceptions to this idea. Members of lynch mobs, often with broad smiling faces, frequently posed for photographs with their victims, creating tokens of memory to be both cherished and sold on the wider market. The torturers of Abu Ghraib posed with their prisoners as well, also offering up smiles and thumbs up signs, seemingly not worried about the implications of such images for international policy and national concern over a disputed war. In both cases, those people willing to step in front of the camera were so sure of their rightness at the time that, indeed, capturing certain exchanges on film was not only authorizing but also reassuring, as the resulting photographs upheld the systems of power that created lynch mobs and torturers in the first place.

But what of that kind of power being displayed to the camera in an art setting? Even though Ono called the 1966 performance of *Cut Piece* "wild," the

photographs taken during the evening do not look particularly different from any other iterations of the performance. Furthermore, the only story Ono ever shares about feeling threatened during performances of the work—in which a man raised the scissors above his head, looking as if he would dramatically push them through the air and into Ono's chest (though he didn't)—actually took place in Japan, where Ono also said that it was "very, very difficult for people to come up" to the stage.[172]

But the presence of cameras does not always confer such a level of response and responsibility to an audience. For example, in 1974, in a gallery in Naples, Italy, Marina Abramović placed 72 objects—including a feather, scissors, and a pistol—on a table and provided instructions that informed audience members that they could use these objects however they wished. Her message included the directive, "I am the object. During this period I take full responsibility."[173] Over the following six hours, Abramović stood or sat in stillness while participating members of the audience manipulated her body with the available objects. Similar to Ono's *Cut Piece*, photographers and videographers documented nearly every minute of Abramović's performance of *Rhythm 0*, though it is unclear who produced these images; when reprinted, the images are offered as a courtesy of the Marina Abramović Institute, but Abramović's own writing about and discussion of the work does not include references to photographers or filmmakers. Nevertheless, certain of the photographs are prolific, providing evidence that some participants played Abramović's scenario out to the extreme. Such an invitation led to a widely-

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[172] Haskell and Hanhardt, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects*, 91.
[173] Frazer Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders: Performance Art and Audience* (New Hampshire: Dartmouth, 2012), 125.

circulated series of photographs of Abramović with a gun pointed toward her neck, after it had been placed in her hand and then her body moved, making the artist look as if she was going to shoot herself (Figure 10). Several photographs show this pose throughout the performance, revealing that eventually Abramović's face was also cut and written on while audience members (mostly men) gathered around her.

In one image from the performance, our view of Abramović is from an upper corner of the room, giving the feeling of looking down on the scene (Figure 11). She is without her shirt at this point, which was cut off by an audience participant. Abramović faces the almost all male crowd, which forms in a semi-circle around her, most only a couple of feet away. The photographer, who is unknown (circulating images of *Rhythm 0* are credited only with the Marina Abramović Archives if at all), has caught what the proliferation of photographs would suggest to be a rare moment: participants are looking, instead of doing. With all eyes on Abramović, with the exception of a small group toward the back of the gallery who seem unaware of the intensity of the mob, the photograph fully conveys the experience of being stared at, of a body literally paralyzed by the male gaze. Within the crowd, cameras obscure four faces, even though none of the individuals are taking the photograph we are now seeing. This only adds to the voyeuristic feel; there are so many eyes on Abramović, including our own.

In her essay entitled "The Returns of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80," published in the catalogue for the major exhibition *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Peggy Phelan writes that for *Rhythm 0* Abramović "promis[ed] to remain

passive for six hours," take responsibility for what might proceed.[174] According to Phelan, this promise resulted in "a growing sense of danger" as participants became more aggressive with the actions incorporating the objects and Abramović's body.[175] In talking about *Rhythm 0*, Abramović acknowledges that the work is about her choosing to risk her body in order to see how far the audience will go. And they do go; according to Abramović, participants only got "more and more wild" as the night and performance went on.[176] Solomon-Godeau connects this to larger perspectives on performance practices at the time, in which women were not passive in Freud's understanding of the term (meaning associated with femininity), but instead that by staging femininity, they are "anything but passive." Instead, artists like Abramović and Ono take on the role of "cultural producer and impresario of the aggression, misogyny, or violence she solicits or actively controls."[177] This type of control within the performance is echoed by control of the documentation, in which encounters are staged for both the audience and for the camera, and thus for the future witness.

Since Abramović's intention was to create a risky situation within the parameters of the performance, it is not entirely clear if those who chose to participate betray Abramović's trust or fulfill the performance's possibility, or both

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[174] Phelan also discusses this work in depth in her essay "On Seeing the Invisible: Marina Abramović's *House with an Ocean View*," in *Live: Art and Performance*, ed. Adrian Heathfield (London: Tate Modern), 2004.
[175] Peggy Phelan, "The Return of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80," in *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 353.
[176] Milica Zec, *Marina Abramović on Rhythm 0 (1974)* (Marina Abramović Institute, 2013), https://vimeo.com/71952791.
[177] Solomon-Godeau, "The Woman Who Never Was: Self-Representation, Photography, and First-Wave Feminist Art," 343.

simultaneously. Things may have gotten wild by the looks of it, but the tenets of the performance stayed in place (just as they did in Ono's *Cut Piece* at the Destruction in Art Symposium), though not without significantly altering the practices and perspectives of the artists. About Abramović but equally applicable to Ono, Phelan writes, "In this radical gesture of an even more profound acceptance of the spectators' will than the original plan, a gesture that showed how active passivity often is, the performance was transformed; Abramović allowed her spectators to become co-creators of her work."[178] The perspective that positions participants as co-creators aligns with an idea that Bryan-Wilson brings up as well: scholarship on *Cut Piece* mostly ignores the "productive components of this piece—namely, that Ono requests the cutting and that the audience takes away something with them."[179] Both art historians are concerned with the *contract* created by a performance, an idea not entirely resolved in terms of response and responsibility.

Kathy O'Dell can aid in parsing out response and responsibility, through her concern with what types of contracts, or agreements about exchange, are created within performance/audience relationships. While O'Dell focuses on the ways specific performance artists in the 1970s incorporate masochistic ideas into their practices and why, she does touch briefly on the significance of photography to such work. She understands reproduced and circulated photographs to only ever be fragmentary and thereby resisting completeness, given the "deconstructive potential of performance art, inasmuch as any desire for traditional narrativist

[178] Phelan, "The Return of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80," 353.
[179] Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's Cut Piece," 106.

closure will always be short circuited by the limited information available."[180] By this, she means that any pull we feel toward declaring an established wholeness of a work by utilizing performance photographs to explain its happenings is productively challenging: faced with fragments, we are reminded that there is no whole possible.

With this lack of a whole in mind, O'Dell investigates why performance photographs overwhelmingly focus on the artist's body, an idea I previously mentioned when discussing the photographs and film of Ono's *Cut Piece*. In the examples of this work, cameramen do not follow a participating audience member back down the theater aisle or even take a photograph of the audience as a whole, instead staying entirely focused on Ono's own body and documenting only those who come into contact with her. O'Dell calls this focus on the body haptic, to emphasize the significance of touch to our understanding of photographic exchange (O'Dell mentions records of infant deaths and small portrait frames but other examples include the carte de visite and Bertillon's criminal portraits, among others). By haptic, she means that "[e]ncountering the shared ontology of the body makes the viewer mindful of his or her own physical presence as *witness* to the pictured event (even if it is well after the fact)."[181] This physical tangible exchange between artist and audience is what O'Dell refers to through her book as a contract. I draw on this here because of the proximity of O'Dell's discussion of a contract to the idea of witnessing (which in fact goes un-discussed throughout the rest of

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[180] Kathy O'Dell, *Contract With The Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 13.
[181] Ibid. Emphasis added.

O'Dell's text). O'Dell's reference to witnessing as fundamental action of interacting with a photograph proposes what many assume: the very act of looking at a picture is really an agreement to engage not only with its materiality but also with its content. To take this a step further, it is possible for a viewer to witness a pictured event, even well after its taking place, precisely because of the layers of bodily presence that photography conjures. This exchange is then not only about bodily presence, or response, but also about responsibility, in that the ontology becomes *shared*; the terms of the contract are accepted.

Shared responsibility—even around one individual's body—does and should make us think again of Schneider, who troubles a definition of "solo" as singular by thinking about jazz and blues music, in which a solo taken by any given performer is rooted in collectivity; indeed, solos "bleed into each other, react to each other."[182] In elaborating on the exchange in such a process, she states that a contract develops "as an artist makes a call and another responds and another responds to that response as a call and a response is made which, again, becomes a call citing, or reciting, a response as call."[183] Many calls draw forth many different kinds of witnesses because it provides opportunities for many responses, creating contracts between not just those who choose to participate in cutting Ono's clothing or Abramović's face, but also those who watch these actions of others, both in the present and well after the fact.[184]

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[182] Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," 37.
[183] Ibid.
[184] As far as I know, the "contracts" I am discussing here—those forged between performers and audience members that carry the potential for violence or violation—have been artistically but never legally tested. For example, Abramović

It is often too easy, well after the fact, to tend to any performance work as if it was presented in a vacuum, rather than fully wrestling with the idea that it most likely had an audience willing to engage in the complexities of live performance. During the evening at Carnegie Recital Hall, Ono performed *Cut Piece* along with *Bag Piece* (in which Ono and a male assistant crawled into a huge black bag, removed their clothes, and did something presumably though not necessarily sexual inside), *Strip-tease for Three* (in which three wooden chairs were spotlighted on an empty stage), *Snake Piece* (in which an announcement was made that a snake had been let loose in the auditorium), and *Clock Piece* (in which a clock was placed onstage and the audience was told that the performance was over when the clock alarm went off).[185] And while in London, where—we are told—things got especially wild, *Cut Piece* was one work among many performed by artists interested in the themes of destruction, anti-art, and violence, including Otto Mühl and Hermann Nitsch. In this way, *Cut Piece* was always presented among performances that required at least some sort of audience participation, implicated the responsibility of audience members, and proceeded without clear parameters of what would happen and when the events would conclude.

I want to return then to the *Cut Piece* film, where the Maysles brothers' documentary style dictates that they are present in the work—see-able by both Ono and the audience—while also acting outside of the script's instructions. When the male participant turns to the audience, smiles, and says, "This might take some

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did not pursue legal action against those audience members who cut her skin or posed the gun to her head. However, it is interesting to speculate on the possibility of such a performance contract having legal obligations or ramifications.

[185] Haskell and Hanhardt, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects*, 29.

time," he is not just talking to Ono or the audience but also to the camera; in fact, he looks right at it while speaking. The woman who worries that he is "getting carried away" sounds as if she is right next to the person filming, and thus providing a type of voiceover (a narrativizing of the events on stage/screen) that expresses not only the concerns of at least some of the present audience members but also those of the future. The man is performing, then, for an audience throughout time, and he knows it, while the many cameramen around him document without interceding. This is because the cameramen understand their role as witnesses to be recorders. The audience witnesses by being both participants and non-participants, even as they are all viewers. Ono's role as witness is dedicated to being present through stillness. And my role as a witness in the contemporary is to be attentive to these many layers and to commit to looking at the photographs when I write about them, rather than simply know that they are there. Such a case makes clear that the contracts established by performance artworks and photographs are examples of networked witnessing, in which witnessing is not only listening and thus validating, but also can take on many other forms.

As for Abramović, audience participants did eventually intervene to remove the gun as an object to be manipulated; as Phelan puts it, "Abramović accepted their care."[186] But otherwise, the contract was carried out for the full six hours, before Abramović's body became a presence other than passive once again. In talking about the work, Abramović noted that when it ended and she began to move, the audience

[186] Phelan, "The Return of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960-80," 353.

ran away, now scared or intimidated by her.[187] She had witnessed the extremities of the willingness of her participants, and in the end, the participants witnessed their own guilt or fear; famously, Abramović has said that what the performance taught her is that "[i]f you give [the audience] total freedom, they will become frenzied enough to kill you."[188] Such images remind us that our bodily limits are in fact mutually created, rather than individually determined. Thus, I feel a responsibility to attend to the ways in which the discomfort or even the disgust that the photographs of Abramović elicit in me are, in a way, an assumption about the potential power of the performance. I am comfortable in my discomfort with the audience's actions, but I am much less comfortable when I contemplate that such actions can be made unfamiliar, and therefore positive: Abramović asked her audience to follow through, and they did. All sides satisfied the contract. The historical evidence not only shows the ruthlessness of some audience members but also the success of the performance itself, and the photographs testify that even the audience's overwhelming presence cannot erase that of Abramović herself, who is still able to step forward and make them all run away.

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[187] See Abramović's compiled video on *Rhythm 0*, accessible through the website for the Marina Abramović Institute and stored here: http://vimeo.com/71952791.
[188] Sean O'Hagan, "Interview: Marina Abramović," *The Guardian*, October 2, 2010, sec. Art and design, http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/oct/03/interview-marina-Abramović-performance-artist.

Section Four – The Eyes of Those Who Have Seen

The Museum of Modern Art in New York showed documentation of *Rhythm 0* almost 40 years after the performance, as part of their museum-wide retrospective of Abramović's work. Gallery after gallery included photographs of Abramović from all ages, reflections on her biography, objects from almost 50 years of previous performances, related ephemera, and films, videos, and photographs of the performances. In the (literal) middle of it all was Abramović herself, performing *The Artist is Present*, where for over 700 hours the artist sat in stillness with the invitation for people to come and sit with her, looking into her eyes as they did so (Figure 12). Much has been said about this performance work in the popular press as a feat of bodily control, concentration, and audience engagement—all readings that fit into overarching interpretations of the artist's oeuvre, as Abramović is now famous for her durational works that push the boundaries of body and mind.[189] *The Artist Is Present* was in some ways a return to Abramović's first long-durational work, *Rhythm 0*. But to say that the artist is present, to give the collection of Abramović's work as well as this specific performance that name, forces the question: What is the difference between the artist being present, and the body of the artist being present? How would we know? Does such a difference matter?

I did not "sit with Marina," as it became known in those heady months of spring 2010, but Amelia Jones did. She writes in an article about artist reenactments and presence,

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[189] For a more complete discussion of this work in relationship to Abramović's oeuvre, see Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Against Performance Art" in *Artforum*, May 2010, 208-213.

> [A]s someone who sat across from Abramović in the atrium of MoMA, surrounded by a barrier like a boxing ring, itself surrounded by dozens of staring visitors, cameras, and lit by klieg lights, I can say personally I found the exchange to be anything but energizing, personal, or transformative. Though I felt aware that the person I have met and whom I respect as an artist and cultural force was sitting there before me, I primarily felt myself the object of myriad individual and photographic gazes (including hers), and the experience overall was very strongly one of participating in a spectacle—not an emotionally or energetically charged interpersonal relation, but a simulation of relational exchange with others (not just the artist, but the other spectators, the guards, the 'managers' of the event).[190]

Such a simulation of relational exchange is a type of the networked witnessing I have proposed. The dyadic framework of witnessing would insist that the relationship here is between Abramović and the sitter, where the trauma of the everyday becomes unspoken common ground for both participants, leading to a validating emotional exchange. But even as *The Artist Is Present* physically creates such a scenario, it denies it all the same. The dyad is completely fragmented; as Jones notes, it is her and Abramović and then also the crowd encircling the space, the employees of the museum, and the camera. Beyond that, it is me and every other viewer who accessed the individual portraits of those who sat with Marina, published on MoMA's Flickr account dedicated to the event.

In uploading a portrait of every single participant in *The Artist is Present* to Flickr, a website intended for photo storage and sharing, the series includes over 1,500 photos that have at the time of this writing been viewed approximately 1.5

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[190] Sean O'Hagan, "Interview: Marina Abramović," *The Guardian*, October 2, 2010, sec. Art and design, http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/oct/03/interview-marina-Abramović-performance-artist.

million times.[191] It is composed of one photo for each instance (as several attendees participated more than once) of a visitor to the museum who sat across from Abramović during the performance, click-able and scroll-able in chronological order (Figure 13). At the time of the exhibition, the Flickr collection became the 2010 version of a viral hit, circulating among those in and outside of the art world, often met with recognition (prompting exclamatory identifications such as "There's Lou Reed!" or "That's Aggie Gund.") as well as some snickering. Indeed, the exhibition was such a popular activity that spring that both a blog and Facebook group were launched specifically for those seen "crying with Marina."

Clearly, it was MoMA's intention to collect these images from the beginning; light screens and cameras were installed before the exhibition's opening and the museum confirmed noted photographer Marco Anelli to do the clicking. The museum also dictated a certain look for these photographs, all taken from the same angle and cropped around the head of the participant. But I wonder: what, in fact, are these photographs showing us at the time of the exhibition? And furthermore, in what way do they continue to act as evidence now? And when will they be installed on the walls of a museum, as simultaneous documents and artworks themselves?

The latter has already to some extent been answered, in that the photographs were featured in the 2012 exhibition *Portraits in the Presence of Marina Abramović*, at Danziger Gallery in New York City. The show included a selection, not all, of the images along with an accompanying publication. The gallery press release makes a

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[191] See: https://www.flickr.com/photos/themuseumofmodernart/sets/72157623741486824/.

comparison between Anelli's work and that of Walker Evans' *Subway Series*, in that *The Artist is Present* "speaks to photography's capacity to explore the human experience from an unobserved viewpoint."[192] But Carrie Lambert-Beatty, in her 2010 article in *Artforum* on the work of Marina Abramović, does not fully buy this idea, in part because the process is far from unobserved (even if participants are not specifically paying attention to the photographer), as Jones experienced. Lambert-Beatty describes the setting as incredibly intentional: "Batteries of light shine down on the artist from the four corners of a stagelike square around her table. A guard polices the queue of acolytes waiting their turn to be in her presence, allowing one person at a time into the sanctum sanctorum."[193] This turns the idea of presence into something entirely based in spectacle, where the "cultural forms evoked by this scene are either grandiose (the pope) or absurd (shopping-mall Santa)."[194] Lambert-Beatty stresses that this is primarily achieved by the emphasis placed on Abramović being in place before the museum opens to the public and staying in her seat beyond its official day-end closing, asking, "Why would it matter if we saw her walk into the room and sit down at the table? All it could possibly do is make her seem like an ordinary human."[195]

The terms of the contract of *The Artist Is Present* were, in many ways, overwhelmingly met. Abramović did not leave her seat for the entire duration, and participants lined up by the hundreds and thousands on each day. What the massive

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[192] "Marco Anelli - Projects & Estates - Danziger Gallery," accessed March 21, 2016, http://www.danzigergallery.com/projects/marco-anelli.
[193] Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Against Performance Art," *Artforum*, May 2010, 212.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.

amount of documentation records—in its very weight, its repetition—is the mostly agreeable and non-threatening participation of the audience. Abramović's body and attention—indeed, her passive *presence*—has become sacred, no longer vulnerable to threatening manipulation. Instead, participants who once channeled her vulnerability into a drive for control (such as placing the gun to Abramović's neck or cutting her face) are now driven to tears. Those tears become the truth of the performance, paralleling the photograph showing a 1974 Abramović with her forehead cut and her cheeks stained and glistening from her own tears. Unlike Evans' series, in which the photographer snapped candid photographers of New York City subway riders unknowingly and without their consent in order to create a cross-section of American urban life, the portraits of Abramović's interlocutors are purposefully meant to look the same, creating one emoting mass rather than differentiating human response. As evidence, they are entirely produced—fabricated by multiple layers of artist and institution for the purpose of accumulation.

Such layers of witnessing are not only obvious in the experience of the work, as Jones details. Running in parallel time, the layers of a social media platform illustrate exactly how Abramović is indeed not present, but instead entirely mediated with no clear authorial distinctions. Anelli receives credit on MoMA's Flickr page, where users write in commentary on the individuals depicted (and these annotations—footnotes, if you will—contain everything from website links of pictured artists to ratings of women based on their looks). The photographs have a certain uniformity that feels like it could lead to analysis, not unlike Allan Sekula's

negative conclusions about photography, empiricism, and state surveillance using the examples of Alphonse Bertillon, a 19th century Paris police official who developed a quickly accessible filing system of portraits of criminals, and Francis Galton, whose system of taking hundreds of portraits of individuals considered to be on the margins of society with the aim of developing an identifiable physical type that could be associated with undesirable behavior or attributes.[196] Though they may not show us the typical viewer of Abramović's MoMA exhibition, they are certainly about a *type* of connection, even though Abramović and the participants are never pictured together; rather, the participants are isolated, floating heads cut off from their bodies if not from their emotions.

Masking all of these individuals in photographic similitude (a Marina museum without walls, perhaps?) provides very little evidence of what actually happened. Yet at the same time, the sheer quantity of the pictures of those sitting with Abramović—as well as their copious tears—seems to testify to the power of the performance. In this case, it is difficult to linger over the images in order to draw out their un-familiarities; the format of their presentation encourages mass consumption and substitution. As a viewer choosing to buy into such a format—specifically, access to so many images of those who sat with Marina—I feel entitled to demand from the photographs a sense of what it felt like to "be there," to sit with this artist, while at the same time thinking of them as staged, overwrought with emotion that becomes rehearsed rather than elicited. But in viewing them, I get stuck in another loop: up close but too far. The truth I find here is in fact the

[196] For a more in-depth discussion of Bertillon and Galton, see: Sekula, "The Body and the Archive."

repetition and continued circulation of Abramović's own celebrity, a notion already established by the artist's relentless publicity machine as well as her strict protocols surrounding any reenactment or re-staging of her performance works. As Jones notes, the entire "concept of presence" becomes dependent on documentation.[197] And pages into the Flickr site, Marina herself is entirely absent, with her own image replaced by the bodies of her viewers who are in turn substitutions for others viewers as well as the performance experience itself: sitting, waiting, looking.

But in reminding myself to look for not just what I already know, I am struck by several things. The occasional smile of a participant, instead of tears, reminds me that within the performance there was room for plurality. The repetition also makes me aware of the craft of photography, such as the ability to identically light and frame each individual, thereby drawing attention to the hundreds if not thousands of photographs that must have been discarded be Anelli and/or the museum. In this way, the repetition actually reminds me that each photograph is entirely singular, made to represent a feeling of an entire sitting session or an entire exhibition, but in fact only offering a second of that time. With this perspective, I learn that the work itself or Marina herself is not so completely monolithic, but instead made up of all of these small parts—these thumbnail faces—in order to merely appear encompassing. The documentation denies Marina's presence through its very form, relying instead on the notion that accumulation (of faces, of historical evidence) is akin to knowledge. In a way, MoMA's Flickr site makes for a peculiar slide

[197] Jones, "The Artist Is Present," 18.

identification exam, in which every photograph is technically different even though the right answer is always "Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present*, 2010."

Staring at so many crying eyes prompts me to recall Barthes, who when looking at an 1852 photograph of Napoleon's youngest brother Jerome, saw not a picture or even a substitution of Jerome, but instead saw "eyes that have looked at the Emperor."[198] Indeed, I look at these pictures and understand that I have not seen this performance, or even Marina, but I have seen the eyes of those who have seen Marina. I have gained a literal glimpse into the experience of the performance, which is primarily made up of other people's experiences instead of my own. The art historical purpose of these photographs, then, is to provide a privileged viewing of a scene not otherwise visible, and thereby an account of the "complex performance" of taking these photographs.[199] I access their purpose through the habitus of the photographs—the click, the scroll—that requires a type of technological handling. Indeed, in this case, Olin is correct: "how photographs look may be less central to their habitus than how people look at them. Or how people refuse to, fail to, or simply do not look at them."[200] The use of these photographs is in recognizing the pose as validation of the event, where we are inundated by the presence of audience members who are contained within the parameters of the performance, even as the documentation makes Marina's own body absent.

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[198] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 3.
[199] Phelan, "Haunted Stages: Performance and the Photographic Effect," 54.
[200] Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 17.

Section Five – Still on the Move

Both *Rhythm 0* and *The Artist is Present* make transparent that the stillness of Abramović's body is not about passivity; instead, stillness becomes action through networked witnessing, in which not only the artist but also the audience, photographers, and future viewers are made aware of the presence and absence of bodies. The distinction between action and stillness is another false dichotomy, such as liveness and documentation, that writers within performance studies—many of which I've discussed here—have adequately challenged so as it make it a now impossible assumption. In her discussion of the division between action and stillness in *Performing Remains*, draws on Konstantin Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*, a book of exercises focused on creating bodily awareness and perception. The text includes a Platonic exchange between teacher and students, in which the Director-as-teacher affirms that one "may sit without a motion and at the same time be in full action."[201]

Ono sits in *Cut Piece* without a motion or even obvious emotion, but her stillness as the actor is an integral aspect of the work. And it is this stillness that photographs (and photographers) both capture and convey in depictions of Ono's passive sitting while surrounded by activity. This makes Ono's performance in *Cut Piece* photographic in its stillness while simultaneously performative in its action. Ono's stillness is a method of suspension that crosses between both performance and photography, allowing access to an understanding of how performance may

[201] Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, 149. As cited from Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, translated by Elizabeth Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 1989 [1936]): 36-7.

indeed capture time (as Ono sits, passive, waiting) and a photograph may in fact make time vanish (all of the actions of the performance —Ono sitting, cutting clothes, audience participation—collapsed into one definable and seemingly easily contained moment).[202] In this way, then, the performance is not linked to action and the photograph is not linked to record, with the assumption that a record provides that otherwise elusive but necessary evidence. By treating the images as already familiar, I have learned to see *Cut Piece*, by which I really mean "Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964-66." In the same way that I cannot un-read the captions Schneider includes with her photographs, I cannot return to some time in which I knew of *Cut Piece* through anything other than photographs, surely a symptom of André Malraux's observations about "the museum without walls." As a French public intellectual during the time of Charles de Gaulle, Malraux's museum without walls explains photography as central to creating an art history in which the context of an artwork becomes secondary to the ability to *picture* the work of art in one's mind's eye, whether or not one have seen it in a museum (or, in this case, seen a "live" performance). Malraux's oft-cited text was subsequently taken up by Douglas Crimp in his seminal essay "On the Museum's Ruins," first published in *October* in 1980 before being anthologized with many of his other writings in a 1993 book of the same title. Through tracing a history of the formation of the museum, Crimp pulls the practices of the 1960s and 1970s forward in time in order to place photography

[202] I take the framework of this language from Schneider, 142.

as a counter to painting.[203] As Crimp notes in his text almost thirty years after Malraux, "Any work of art that can be photographed can take its place in Malraux's supermuseum. But photography not only secures the admittance of various objects, fragments of objects, details of objects to the museum, it is also the organizing device: it reduces the now even vaster heterogeneity to a single perfect similitude."[204] Over the course of his career, a concern about the homogeneity of the museum is an ongoing issue for Crimp, who argues consistently for understanding the museum space as one that appears to be the natural repository—or home—for artworks but is in fact highly constructed and problematically "universal."

Crimp's form of institutional critique is more pressing, as it becomes common "best practice" for museums to collect documentary photographs, particularly of performances, and display them as artworks. In arguing that the act of photographing artworks is what makes them place-able—and thereby know-able—within museums, Crimp also makes reference to the academy. This type of universalizing of images is obviously central to the practice of memorization that disciplinary practices in art history often require, including the slide identification exam I already discussed. As he says, "The art historian's slide lecture and the art history student's slide comparison exam inhabit the museum without walls," by which he means that the practice of teaching art history through memorization is

[203] Here, Crimp's argument is influenced by Walter Benjamin's concept of the "aura" of a work of art that dissipates in its photographic reproduction, as discussed in the Introduction.
[204] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 54.

yet another iteration of Malraux's vision of endlessly circulating reproductions.[205] Crimp's example is about the ability to compare Gustav Caillebotte and Robert Ryman, but my own earlier mention of "Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964-66" is just as relevant, since Crimp's point is that photographs have the ability to stand in for something else (an artwork, an event, an experience, a person). The pedagogical practices of art history as a discipline force works to exist within a museum without walls, in that photographs create opportunities not only for comparisons that could or would not otherwise be made but also for substitutions.

The most reproduced and circulated photographs of *Cut Piece* do masquerade as substantial substitutions and totalities, both standing in for a person/event (as Saltzman argues they are capable of doing) and encompassing all of the elements dictated by Ono's script as essential to the work. But what the photographs in fact offer is what Gavin Butt calls an "elusive totality," or an optical engagement with a subjective experience that cannot be completely known, in the positivist sense, through seeing.[206] Instead, viewing these photographs is a practice of "situated seeing", in which knowledge is understood to be mediated, in this case via both technology (photography itself and the camera as an apparatus) and subjectivity (the limitations of embodiment, the possibilities of many

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[205] Ibid., 54–55. We may think back, too, to Malraux's remark that "Our feeling for a work of art is rarely independent of the place it occupies in art history." See: André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1953), 52.
[206] Butt, "Happenings in History, Or, the Epistemology of the Memoir," 121. Butt's concept of "elusive totality" appears concurrently with post-positivism, providing another angle on the way in which truth exists but always in a mediated and non-objective form.

perspectives).[207] To understand the intersection of technology and subjectivity that photographs present, I embrace a Derridian approach previously discussed: the supplement creates space in which the present and the record of the past exist at the same time. The appeal of an actual totality, as compared to an elusive one, as a method for stilling performance ultimately unravels, even as the photograph seems effectively to illustrate both the present and the record. This is not unlike the body itself in performance, which Peggy Phelan argues is always about supplementarity: "performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body—that which cannot appear without a supplement."[208] Phelan means that complete knowledge of the subject is never available, even when the body is offered up to us for our viewing and manipulation. The performing body is its own supplement to being, just as documentation is its own supplement to performance. Supplementarity becomes a matter of representation, then, both in the moment and in further interpretation and contextualization.

The photographs of *Cut Piece*, not necessarily the performances themselves, permit the work to enter a broader art historical discussion, as they can be memorized, presented, published, and analyzed. Ultimately, *Cut Piece* itself becomes an apt commentary on history. Not only is the artwork always already given over to history in the planning on its documentation, but Ono makes herself into an object of study also, establishing a relationship with the audience that is always already (art) historical in nature. While Ono is steadfast in her objecthood, the audience

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[207] Ibid.
[208] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), 151–152.

goes about choosing a path of participation, which for some involves making or taking cuts. Despite the proliferation of images showing the scissors in someone's hand, many audience members chose not to cut at all. What the work does, then, is make visible—on different bodies in different moments across time—individuals' modes of thinking or their personal desires. *Cut Piece* invites, even requires, this type of embodied acting out in public revelation of one's actions. And ultimately, as in history, some moments are preserved while others are discarded. Thus, art history recycles the same picture of the man holding the scissors as substitute for the event, without memorizing or analyzing or teaching or publishing a different photograph—which I often wish to be out there somewhere—of the quiet, potentially tired (these were often long evenings), maybe stunned audience, all staring back at us after they have been told what to do, deciding which path they will each take. In this way, use of the photographs of *Cut Piece* itself becomes evidence of a disciplinary desire to make photographs evidential.

Of course, the photograph I have proposed above is imaginary. Or perhaps it isn't, since I highly doubt that every photograph of every performance of *Cut Piece* is in some form of circulation—so at points I meditate on the idea that such a photograph is trapped in a film canister in someone's attic, as undeveloped as the argument that could be made with it as evidence. But I think equally as much about a rarely published photograph, made visible in Haskell and Hanhardt's retrospective book on Ono (Figure 14). [209] Minoru Niizuma took it on the night of Ono's New York performance of *Cut Piece*, though it does not show that work, or even Ono. It shows a

[209] Haskell and Hanhardt include this photograph in the "Early Performance Works" section of their book, *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects*.

woman bending down to examine something on the ground, a small square-ish object with some kind of face on it, seemingly placed alone on the big wooden stage of Carnegie Recital Hall. From Haskell and Hanhardt's text, we learn that this photograph was taken during *Clock Piece*, the final work performed that evening, during which a clock was placed at the center of the stage and the audience told that the piece would end when the clock's alarm rang. Upon investigation, audience members realized that the clock had neither arms nor an alarm. Perhaps that is why the woman in this photograph has her coat on; it is the end of the night and it should be the end of the show, but the dysfunctional clock (or maybe purely non-functional clock, or even non-clock, since what is a clock that cannot tell time?) holds the audience hostage.

But behind the woman is my real interest, my punctum. Just over the curve of her behind is visible a figure standing about ten feet away from her, whose body is mostly in shadow due to his posture, peeking out from behind the stage curtains. His face is also obscured, but not because of the light. Rather, he is holding up a camera, with one finger on the shutter and the other hand focuses the lens. He is photographing the same thing that I see now, but from the other side. He can't see me but I am caught in his shot, able to make eye contact with the camera, equally invested in poring over this woman poring over this clock. This man is photographing me, in 2016, all the way from 1965.

When I identify this part of the photograph as the punctum, I am taking into account Olin's elegant dismantling of Barthes' punctum within the James VanDerZee photograph discussed earlier. In reviewing this mistaken moment of Barthes, Olin

makes a strong case for the punctum as a moving target, remarking, "the punctum may be the composition; the punctum may be forgotten; the punctum may be in a different photograph."[210] Within this discussion, she concludes that the "punctum is the detail that is not there, or that one wishes were not there…*present within its absence*."[211] In my case with this photograph of Ono's *Clock Piece*, the punctum prompts me not to wish that something was not there but rather to long for some things to be there, to envision and pursue an altogether different photograph from the one in front of me. I do not see the photographer's face and I am not sure of his name. I do not even have his picture (in that I have neither his own face nor the photograph he takes himself). His presence is marked by further absences.

The layers of this photograph are as visible—once one really stops to look for them—as those that I discussed about the widely circulated photographs of *Cut Piece*: the audience member (who has chosen to participate by coming up on the stage) looks at the face of the clock, the audience looks at the face of the clock as well as the woman and multiple photographers (whose faces are obscured by their instruments), and the photographer's camera is pointed toward my own peering face (even though I know I can and never will appear in his photograph). These very layers make obvious the nature of networked witnessing, in that each of the witnesses I just named have different responses to the work as well as different responsibilities to those responses. The punctum is, in this way, a version of the call for response—the detail that is not there or that one wishes were not there. The presence that marks both absence and unexpected presence. Such an exchange

[210] Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 2012, 60.
[211] Ibid., 64. Emphasis added.

cannot rely on confirmation, because there are too many different viewpoints to provide. Instead, by exposing the unfamiliarly emphasized presence of the photographer alongside the noticeable absence of the artist's body, my responsibility is to validate the photograph through consideration of its many witnesses. Thus, in one clicked moment that we can now see again, the invisibility of one frame frames the visibility of another, unmooring the canonized perspective of *Cut Piece* by forcing recognition that these images are directed, collected, and produced, and thereby networked. There are bodies in time, not frozen but recording, tasked with keeping the past alive. They are, back then, producing photographic evidence that we handle in our present. The photograph as historical evidence is simultaneously sure and undefined, knowable and wild.

Our methods should match their "madness," then. In the case of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, art historians need to look at the photographs not as confirmation of what we already know but as testimony that can and likely will challenge our perceptions and interpretations. We need to resist the slide identification exam substitution. In all of the artists and works discussed here, or in any situation in which we turn to photographs as historical evidence, we should be careful to remember that these documents are not all we have. Rather, we must network them within an entire field of witnesses who offer truths about not just the artists or the performances but the photographs themselves. We need to train ourselves as art historians to become acutely aware of the many layers of documentary photographs—the networked witnessing happening both in and on them—rather than treating them as typical primary sources. In this chapter, I have proposed the initial steps of that training:

looking for the unfamiliar or even the unrecognizable by slowing down, by contextualizing, by inter-viewing the photograph rather than finding exactly what we came looking for. In these steps, our responsibility is to willingly see documentary photographs anew—to see them as unfamiliar—in order to respond to them in a way that privileges not just the artist or interpretation, but instead advances their multiple possibilities of meaning.

Chapter Two: The other side of the tape

In spring of 2015, I was presenting at a conference in Chicago on a topic quite different from that of my dissertation. Having only recently resolved that artist interviews would be a significant focus of my research, I had many conversations over the course of the weekend about the significance of artist interviews to the production of contemporary art history, during which my colleagues offered insights into their practices, reflected on how to teach methodologies, and expressed interest in how the artist interview came to be so popular. The most compelling exchange came during a brief conversation with a mid-career scholar who had a story about an interview, though not one she had performed herself. She relayed to me an experience of an established art historian who, for a major book publication, had set out to interview an artist notorious for offering the same answers in every interview throughout a very long life. This scholar spent quite a bit of time plotting questions that would prompt the artist to give new and revelatory answers, resulting in a more exclusive interview than others. Yet despite the scholar's attempts, the artist did not deviate from providing rote answers, just as always. Apparently, upon completion of the interview, the artist looked this art historian over and smirked, remarking, "I hope you got what you wanted." My conference confidante relayed this story with a sort of conspiratorial sense of discipline-specific gossip, intended to encourage my pursuit of such a topic by agreeing that artist interviews are indeed tricky sources. In doing so, she effectively illustrated the circumstances under and through which artist interviews are attained and circulated.

This story reveals the persistent centrality of biography to the discipline of art history, where both the voices of the artist and the art historian are emphasized as central to any understanding of art-making. It also demonstrates preparation, or the willingness to know one's subject and study it so intensely that one can believe that different and better questions will yield different and thereby better answers. Furthermore, it reveals a desire for exclusive access on behalf of the art historian paired with a desire to attain a certain completeness of vision in terms of *who* the artist is and *why*. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the anecdote plays out the significance of networked exchange among both artists and art historians, and how this exchange has a significant impact on the practice and writing of art history. More plainly, and more provocatively, one could call this gossip. Gossip is what made sure the established art historian knew about the artist's interview style in the first place, and gossip is what got the story to me nearly five years later, with a mid-career scholar letting an emerging one in on a trade secret. As gossip goes, there's not much at stake in the story itself, but it was whispered in a boardroom corner nonetheless.

Thus, I knew from the beginning that in order to write about artist interviews, I would need to become an interviewer myself. When questioned about the use of artist interviews in writing contemporary art history, colleagues revealed that they often saw artist interviews as prompts to which they could write against, as in the search for artists' words that either definitively support their thinking or with which they can stridently disagree. Others said that they avoided interviewing artists even when they could, because they did not want the artist to cast too much

influence on what they might think or say. An art critic and performance artist pointed out that artists might purposefully seek out interviews with scholars in order to provide these writers with more intimate access to the artists' work. The intention here is for artists to establish long-term relationships in which they continue to influence possibilities for criticality while also assuring that the scholar creates documents that establish the artists' own significance.[212] This recalls elements of Amelia Jones' experience of being criticized for not developing closer relationships with artists precisely because she believes it clouds her scholarly perspective. Taken together, these anecdotes and admissions begin to reveal an art historical dilemma: the dream of some of our non-contemporary colleagues—in which talking to long-dead artists would provide a clear path to illuminating the meaning of the artwork while surely filling in the sometimes threadbare tapestry of biography—is not such a simple one. Instead, artist interviews are anything but straightforward.

Popular methodological texts within the field of teaching art history, such as Eric Fernie's *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology* or Donald Preziosi's *The Art of Art History*, place the disciplinary origins of art history in artist biography,

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[212] Here I owe a great deal of thanks to Anthony Romero, whose influence can certainly be seen throughout this dissertation but whose particular thoughts on this idea directly shaped this chapter. In a very memorable mid-morning coffee break, Anthony proposed the idea that while generating documents related to his work, he should include in them notes to future scholars and biographers: "I sound grumpy here because this was on the news the night before" or "don't make this sentence central to any argument about what my work might mean—I wrote it half asleep and hated it the next morning." In this, Anthony made apparent how central artists' own words are to the work of art history while at the same time how distant we as historians are from them (the words and the artists), even if we are all contemporary.

connecting the practices of Giorgio Vasari and others to the humanism of the Renaissance. While writers such as Winckelmann, Hegel, and Derrida eventually challenge this emphasis—as they each in turn as well as with others work to place emphasis artists within the development of history over the romance of individual achievement or genius—the centrality of the artist never fully dissipates. Logically, this emphasis on humanism makes artist biography a primary concern of feminism, critical race theory, and queer theory, which are fields that require thinkers and readers to understand who exactly is being conceived of as "human" within humanism. Out of an interest in the circumstances of both humanity and history, the study of artist biography has become a field of art history itself, taken up initially by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz. Kris and Kurz's own biographies—both precocious learners at a young age, both students at Vienna University during the interwar period as students of Julius von Schlosser, and both called "intellectual prodigies" by E.H. Gombrich[213]—help to secure their place in the origin story of artist biography, resulting in the writing of *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* in 1934. In this book, Kris and Kurz are concerned not so much with the truths of artists' biographies, but instead are focused on the very idea that stories about artists are told at all. From these stories come tropes: the young and uneducated talent is accidentally discovered (this usually involves a boy sheepherder and an established mentor fortuitously crossing paths); success is tied to an ability to depict nature so accurately as to fool even one's teachers; the artist

[213] Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*, ed. E. H. Gombrich (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), ix.

becomes a God-like figure whose gifts are, somehow, both innate and God-given. Kris and Kurz note that, in fact, the question as to "whether statements contained in an anecdote in this or that particular case are true" become entirely "irrelevant."[214] "The only significant factor," according to them, "is that an anecdote recurs, that it is recounted so frequently as to warrant the conclusion that it represents a typical image of the artist."[215] Their perspective emphasizes circulation of information, which relates to their concern not with the artist, but with the *image* of the artist. As they put it, "We regard the hero of these typical anecdotes as depicting the typical artist—as *the image of the artist* which the historian had in mind."[216] The work of Kris and Kurz has not always been read with this last statement as the focus; rather, its primary legacy is within identifying tropes in the larger genealogical practice of art history.[217] But I am most interested in the way Kris and Kurz acknowledge that the image of the artist is always in fact about the mind of the historian, as my chapter considers not what artists should *look* like but how they are expected to *sound* within a given exchange.

Doing so requires acknowledging the fraught position of biography within art history, particularly as so much writing on contemporary art is influenced by Roland Barthes encouragement of theorists and general readers alike to rejoice in the death of the author/artist, effectively criticizing the idea that "the *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end,

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[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid., 11.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Gombrich discusses the psychoanalytic origins (indeed, Kris crossed paths with Freud) as well as the extended legacy of Kris and Kurz's work in his 1978 preface to the text.

through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us."[218] Catherine Soussloff takes up this criticism in her book *The Absolute Artist*, which reveals our continued romanticization of the presence of the author's or artist's confidences by pointing out the "obvious lack of critical discussion about the concept of the artist in exactly the literature where one might expect to find it," by which she means historiographical writing.[219] In her writing on the sculptor William Edmondson, whose biography is both central to art historical analysis of his work and flexible in its details, art historian Jennifer Marshall calls biography "not just out of fashion," but "contraband—viewed as the instrument of a blinkered and politically manipulative form of historiography."[220] Indeed, it is manipulative in the ways that Marshall points out: the fiction of artist biography is "an idealized myth of creative human potency" in which both "human" and "potency" come with deep ideological assumptions and motivations.[221] But there is also the matter of the biographer here. In order to establish the biographical tropes that Kris and Kurz discuss, such as divine intervention or talent in youth, biographers themselves must "delight in anecdotes of artists insubordinate to normative regimes of power."[222] By this, Marshall means that from Vasari onward, art historians take interest in the ways in which artists buck social expectations,

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[218] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1988), 143.
[219] Catherine Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 4.
[220] Manuscript for future publication: Jennifer Marshall, "This Book Is about the Artist as a Figure of Freedom." February 2016, 16.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, 8.

even as the act of canonization—upheld through biographical historicization—normalizes these actions.

Certainly, artist biography can be painted with the broadest of brushes for the most narrow of purposes. In a recent article in the *New York Times* discussing the sale of a sculpture by Edmondson, arts reporter Robin Pogrebin notes, "The previous record for a work by Edmonson (1874-1951), the son of freed slaves, was $263,000."[223] The seemingly casual mention of a biographical detail—"the son of freed slaves"—reads all the more dramatically next to a six-figure price tag, successfully purporting the narrative of a poor black kid making good in America. A more dramatic example is that of Cornel West's description of Horace Pippin in his essay "Horace Pippin's Challenge to Art Criticism," in which he writes the following:

> Pippin's art remained rooted in black folk culture, yet also appealed to the culture industry of his day. He indeed gained significant validation and recognition from the white art establishment—but at what personal and artistic cost? Do all American artists in our market culture bear similar costs? Unlike William H. Johnson and Beauford Delaney, Pippin did not go mad. But his wife did spend her last months in a mental institution after a breakdown. Pippin did drink heavily—yet we do not know whether this was related directly to his art career. So in regard to the personal costs; our answer remains open-ended.[224]

In these texts, the significance of biography obviously intersects with the meaning of race, and even as we grasp the complexities of such a topic—the so-called "personal costs" at stake here—their authors include no further details, citations, or

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[223] Robin Pogrebin, "'Boxer' Sells for $785,000 at Christie's," ArtsBeat*, New York Times*, January 22, 2016, http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/22/boxer-sells-for-785000-at-christies/.
[224] Cornel West, "Horace Pippin's Challenge to Art Criticism," in *Race-Ing Art History*, ed. Kymberly Pinder (New York: Routledge, 2002), 324–325.

explanations. West's bit of gossip about Pippin's wife and his drinking has now entered the scholarly sphere as artist biography.

Even if traditional biography has gone "out of fashion," as Marshall asserts, it seems that artist interviews have risen to take its place. Far from contraband, artist interviews feel ubiquitous, from the most sophisticated journals to glossy magazines, from personal research and archives to online forums. In these various formats, unlike other scholarly writing practices and products, artist interviews often effectively "stand alone," by which I mean they come with very little context and even less interpretation. Thus, with West in mind, my chapter considers the following questions: When we read artist interviews, what exactly have we gone looking for? At what cost do interviews come? In such a practice and format, what is lost and what is gained? I should warn readers that I do not offer single or simple answers to my original questions because the examples I consider require different calls for response from readers and art historians. My goal, instead, is to raise artist interviews as a problem of the contemporary, in that art historians don't really learn how to do them and we don't necessarily know what to do with them, despite their conferred upon status as useful historical evidence in writing about the present and recent past.

My interest in the third question is why I mention Fernie and Preziosi in a discussion of artist biography; these texts provide a methodological foundation, frequently employed in introductory art history seminars, that establishes artist biography as central to the practice of art history. Yet, the authors rarely acknowledge when and how that biography is attained. For example, throughout his

introduction to art historical methods, Fernie implies that biography is a central piece of documentary evidence, but at no point are artist interviews (or other platforms, for that matter) formally named as ways in which artists might present their biographies, or their selves, to the world. What is important to my point is the ideas that intellectual production makes clear that artist biographies are sought out, created, and mediated in various ways and have been throughout history, even as art history methodology texts treat biography as un-locatable in terms of its origin or generation. Such a gap effectively creates a perception that artists are certainly the subjects of art history, privileging them as sites of discourse, but not examining the ways in which, as Soussloff puts it, "all written accounts, such as biographies or art history dependent on these texts, have been seen as the 'natural' expression of the artist's intentions."[225] For such texts that have been "naturalized," we struggled to gain a critical perspective on their contribution.

My chapter considers printed interviews that originated orally, as there have been many recent efforts to capture not just artists' words but artists' voices. I begin with a long-unpublished conversation between Andy Warhol and art historian Benjamin Buchloh, an exchange that introduces many of the major concerns of this chapter, including artist networks, history, and death. I then turn briefly to set artist interviews within a broader contemporary drive toward archival preservation in the 20th and 21st centuries. Next, I return to Buchloh for an interview with Thomas Hirschhorn, which proposes to do the work of "typical" art history, an assumption I complicate by looking closely at access and audience. I close the chapter with artist

[225] Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, 6.

words overshadowed by death. First, I consider the lauded "father" of modernism and performance, Jackson Pollock, who is made to speak both before and after his gruesome and life-ending car accident. Finally, the themes of artist networks, audience, and access come together in interviews with Robert Smithson, through a discussion of the way artists' words stay with them and shape the meaning of their work long after their death. In working through these examples in terms of my questions—When we read artist interviews, what exactly have we gone looking for? At what cost do interviews come? In such a practice and format, what is lost and what is gained? —I take a cue from Rosalind Krauss, who in the final pages of her book *The Optical Unconscious* relives her own watching of an interview with Clement Greenberg about meeting Jackson Pollock, a story which he has recounted hundreds of times. In debating whether Greenberg sounds "bored," Krauss determines the opposite: "If he's willing to broadcast the story over so many retellings, no matter how routinized and compressed, it's because he has a project, a mission."[226] This mission, according to Krauss, is to "lift [Pollock] above those pictures" that showed him drunk, mean, or frenetically working, "just as it was to lift the paintings Pollock made from off the ground where he'd made them, and onto the wall."[227] Krauss moves on to talk about the ways in which Pollock's work was perceived as childish and then ordered, but her focus on her own personal remembrance of Greenberg—even referring to him as "Clem" throughout—illustrates the significance of our story-telling, of the act of repeating stories in

[226] Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 244.
[227] Ibid.

interviews and texts. Krauss' account centers her own subjectivity, making the interview both faulty and wishful even as she provides for the reader a sense of the "real" Clem.

With this sort of exchange in mind, my aim in this chapter is not to re-do the work around interviews that many anthropologists and social scientists have already done so well. Scholars within these fields typically focus on the logistical unfolding of a conversation, including the length of pauses between each speaker, noting who interrupts whom, or interpreting the meaning behind who speaks louder or laughs more. These elements are sometimes conveyed—think of the "[laughs]" insert—but go relatively unexamined in interviews in the humanities, art history included, either as methods of analyzing evidence or within pedagogical preparation for working in the discipline. I do not think that art historians should start doing detailed linguistic analysis in order to "better" use interviews in our practice, and in fact, I avoid doing this type of work in any in-depth way in this chapter, because my concern is how art history *already* uses interviews. My goal is to examine what we already do and why and how, not what we *might* do if our discipline morphed into another. A future study could advocate for contemporary art historians to become linguistic as well as visual analysts; mine stops short of this recommendation because of a loyalty I feel to the object and material production as central to art historical study. Even so, there is no good reason for us to continue acting as if artist interviews are exactly what they appear to be by avoiding the unique type of witnessing relationship that they establish. Thus, I am interested in the ways in which interviews deal in a certain form of enviable access and

authority—that of the living, breathing artist speaking in (usually) his own words or the interviewer managing to capture those words right before the artist becomes un-living and un-breathing—while at the same time eluding transparency.

Section One – "The way new things happen and stuff"

In 1985, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh interviewed Andy Warhol, though the exchange was not made public until the publication of *October Files: Andy Warhol*, nearly 20 years later.[228] I begin here because of the obvious: where else would a contemporary conversation about the artist interview start if not with Warhol. Warhol is a master performer who, even from the choosing of his own (now household) name, worked to elude any establishment of a clear biography while also seeking public recognition. From his beginnings, Warhol understood the value of giving people—and not just art historians—something to talk about, a project that goes along with his work to insert himself (or, at least, his practice) into the history of famous (and infamous) figures such as Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy. He formalized this practice in *Interview*, the magazine he founded in 1969.

But Warhol is not the only person whose interests come to the surface in this 1985 interview. Buchloh is a major scholar in the field of art history, whose contributions include many books and articles as well as membership in the *October* editorial team. From its founding in 1976 by Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, *October* has been dedicated to rigorous art historical writing that is not only intellectually engaged but also politically Left, firmly situating its project as distinguishable from the art criticism offered by other magazines. The journal does not include interviews very often, preferring long-form and heavily researched

[228] *October Files* is a series of books published by the MIT Press. Each book focuses on an individual artist of the postwar period, featuring essays that were often initially published in *October* magazine. The *October Files* on Andy Warhol is edited by Annette Michelson and along with the interview with Buchloh, includes essays by Michelson, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Thomas Crow, and Nan Rosenthal.

articles. Buchloh has written regularly for the journal, as a member of the editorial board, and he was the primary editor of *October*'s Spring 2010 special issue on Warhol. Indeed, Buchloh has a long history of writing on Warhol, including his contributions to the 1990 exhibition catalogue for *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, the first major examination of the artist's oeuvre and organized by the Museum of Modern Art, and his 2008 book *Andy Warhol. Shadows and Other Signs of Life*, which was published on the occasion of Warhol's would-be 80th birthday and a significant exhibition of his work in Paris.[229]

Buchloh's conversation with Warhol begins with Buchloh stating that he is currently researching Dadaism in terms of its reception in the 1950s, and that he wants this interview to speak to that history.[230] With this frame, Buchloh is particularly interested in a never-released film that Warhol made with Marcel Duchamp (that other well-known artist whose public personas as both Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy confused biographical definition), which Warhol clarifies was never even actually made. Buchloh seems to not like this answer, firing questions at Warhol about his relationship with contemporary art history's original trickster—"You knew [Duchamp] well enough at the time to have been able to do it?" and "But you had some contact with him?"—and Warhol's responses revel in his colloquialisms—"I mean" and "Well, yeah"—while avoiding directly answering any

[229] See: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Andy Warhol: Shadows and Other Signs of Life* (Koln: Walther Konig, 2008).
[230] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "An Interview with Andy Warhol," in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson, October Files 2 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 119.

inquiries.[231] As Buchloh continues to suggest a myriad of connections between Warhol's work and that of other artists preceding him, drawing logical lines of influence, Warhol submits the ultimate useless answer: "I wasn't thinking of anything."[232] Where does an interviewer go from here?

This publication leaves out the sort of affect elements that are sometimes included in interviews, noting that one speaker laughs while another might smile or look concerned, for example. Even without these asides, the printed version of this interview creates an experience for the reader through which Buchloh's frustration becomes evident, as he seems to be interrogating Warhol: "So [the repeated images as silkscreens] had nothing to do with a general concern for seriality? It was not coming out of John Cage and concepts of musical seriality; those were not issues you were involved with at the time?"[233] Phrasing the questions in the negative is notable, rather than genuinely inquiring about Warhol's own process, which might look something like: "What issues were you involved with at the time?" or "Were the silkscreens made in reference to other practices of seriality at the time?" Instead, Buchloh sounds disbelieving, wanting Warhol to acknowledge these practices as connected, if not definitively influential, to his own.

When Warhol continues to defer defining his relationships with other artists, Buchloh changes tactics by moving to statements rather than questions: "Serial form

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[231] As I will discuss later in this chapter, the presence of Warhol's linguistic idiosyncrasies is a choice of both Buchloh and Michelson, as the editor of this iteration of *October Files*. Often, "ums," "uhs," and "I means" are edited out of interviews in both transcripts and publications, making their presence here worthy of note.
[232] Buchloh, "An Interview with Andy Warhol," 120.
[233] Ibid., 121.

had become increasingly important in the early 1960s, and it coincided historically with the introduction of serial structures in your work."[234] Even here, Warhol slips out of Buchloh's grasp by responding to that seemingly clear and correct art historical fact with "I don't know" before losing track of other artists all together: "Because then, after a while, I did like some people, like, you know, the guy who just does the squares, what's his name?"[235]

When Buchloh moves to statements, Warhol switches to questions. His question to his interviewer about painters launches Buchloh into a wordy answer stocked with recognizable names within the art historical canon. This exchange marks a shift in the interview, where the reader realizes that Buchloh is now in the role of teacher rather than interviewer, offering Warhol an art history lesson. In response, Warhol takes on the role of unknowing producer—"I didn't even know who that person was" and "I still don't know the drawings, really"[236]—while Buchloh affirms his role as expert historian (and therefore recounter, rather than producer) by recalling who moved to New York when, which dealers were circulating works, and what these styles looked like.

The conversation finally coalesces into a discussion of a new exhibition that Warhol wishes to call "The Worst of Warhol," as it would be full of ideas that he has only been trying out without fully developing. Warhol makes it all sound very open, but Buchloh is not convinced:

> Buchloh: Yes, but aren't they also commenting in a way on the current state of painting, in the same manner that the *Oxidation* paintings are

[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid., 122.

extremely funny, poignant statements on what is currently going on in the general return to painterly expressivity and technique?

Warhol: Oh, I like all paintings; it's just amazing that it keeps, you know, going on. And the way new things happen and stuff.

Buchloh: But don't you think that there is a different attitude toward technique in the *Oxidation* paintings or in the *Rorschach* paintings?[237]

Buchloh is pushing Warhol to see himself not just as a painter, but also as a painter who is concerned with and has a firm place within the larger field of painting. However, it is just as likely that Buchloh realizes that Warhol will never confirm how he sees himself and is instead concerned with how the audience for this interview might see Warhol. This attention to audience interpretation becomes activated by what I would call "buzzwords" of one sort or another: commenting, current state, return, painterly expressivity, technique, attitude. If one were to read this exchange out loud, they would likely orally perceive Buchloh's rhetorical corralling: "But aren't they?" "But don't you think?" As Buchloh bandies on down the mile, Warhol refuses to give him an inch: "and stuff." The printed interview ends on a similarly strange, unresolved note, when Warhol asks Buchloh, "What do you think has happened? Do you think it is not that good?"[238] Thus at the end, Warhol fully takes on the role of interviewer, posing two incredibly open-ended questions to Buchloh about the state of the field.

Ultimately, Warhol provides very little information about his art practice and instead the interview examines Buchloh's own art history practice—that of doing contemporary art history through historical categorization, romanticization of the 1960s, and indeed the use of artist interviews as access to another place and time.

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[237] Ibid., 124.
[238] Ibid., 128.

After reading this, interviewing an artist seems like it might not be such an enlightening, much less enjoyable, venture. There's no doubt Warhol was tricky, and all Buchloh wanted to know is what other artists have been important or influential for him, which to me seems like a fair concern. But I am interested in how their exchange and its subsequent publication so clearly displays the ways in which artist interviews are unwieldy, offering access to *something* but doing so without any transparency. By a lack of transparency here, I mean that there are many aspects that the interview format takes on in its production, such as editing of beginning and end, colloquialisms, tone of voice, etc. In this way, the interview is not just about the information it contains, but also fundamentally about editing. In Warhol's willingness to be caught with nothing to say, he in fact escapes capture, and Buchloh is left to write art history not only with the interview, but also within it. I say this because the interview does provide a sense of the "true" Warhol—the elusive art star who craved attention while eschewing definition. And now that Buchloh has witnessed, first-hand, Warhol's performance of the self, Buchloh too can testify to the truth of the artist's being, with this interview as evidence. Thus, the interview works as evidence but maybe not of what I originally went looking for. By that, I mean that I might seek out this interview wanting to learn about Warhol, and instead learn about art history or even Buchloh.

Section Two – Archive Fevered

The notion of the intentionally edited interview is so pervasive that it may seem unworthy of note, but as I think about what might be lost or gained in any particular exchange, then purposes of collection become significant. The second half of the 20th century has seen the emergence of several large-scale archives dedicated to the arts, a growth that parallels development and interest in the arts more generally. Richard Candida Smith traces this institutionalization in his article "Modern Art and Oral History in the United States: A Revolution Remembered," linking the shift from European- to American-focused art education heralded by Abstract Expressionism to statistical data showing the massive expansion of museum, corporate, and private collections after 1940.[239] Smith notes that the purpose of interviews within the artist has consistently been to understand what is considered significant. He states, "The regional and local orientation of most oral history projects promoted efforts to show, in the words of one interviewer, that while her community might not have witnessed anything as exciting as the birth of impressionism, it was never mired in the Dark Ages either."[240] The purpose of such interviews can be to expand our view of importance, in that "[o]ral history collections give a sense of the variety of experience and the attitudes prevalent among the rank and file of professional artists at various times in this century," revealing the ways in which self-image and self-representation connect to larger

[239] Richard Candida Smith, "Modern Art and Oral History in the United States: A Revolution Remembered," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 2 (September 1991): 599.
[240] Ibid., 601.

socio-cultural trends or circumstances.[241] This variety provides opportunity for the contemporary art historian to begin to identify national patterns and influences (particularly those in the 20th century that were economic, including the New Deal and post-World War II welfare systems such as the GI Bill) as well as access extremely individual experiences and perceptions. As Smith observes, "Interviews often reveal surprising connections, which would otherwise be invisible or purely speculative."[242]

Running parallel to the creation of artist interview archives is an explosion of artist work dedicated to the archive itself, both in form and in theory. We can easily draw from artists such as Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter, Mary Kelley, Zoe Leonard, Walid Raad and the Atlas Group, and Christian Boltanski, all of who create work expressly interested in generating archival material and/or drawing on already existing archives. There are also artists whose work becomes specifically about the interview, as recorded for posterity, such as Anna Deavere Smith or Andrea Fraser. In *Projection* from 2008, Fraser plays both psychologist and patient in a work based on transcripts of actual psychotherapy sessions, adapted into monologues that she then delivers as a full-wall projection staring directly into the camera. Smith, most known for her primetime television roles, also incorporates interview transcripts into her performance practice by taking on the characters and viewpoints of those she interviews.

All of this archival attention, including that given by scholars such as Michel Foucault, Douglas Crimp, Hal Foster, and Okwui Enwezor, is part of Jacques

[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid., 605.

Derrida's diagnosis the 20th century as one driven by "archive fever." Derrida's conclusions about the archive are driven by Freudian analysis, and in many ways belie an assumption of privilege, in which to collect feverishly is a narcissistic act rather than one of resistance or survival.[243] Yet we should not let the terms here mislead us; we know to starve a fever in order to get rid of it, but in reality the archive compels us to do the opposite. The projects of these artist archives have no knowable boundaries—no end points—because they are driven solely by the collection of artists' voices. At its most basic (which is not to say uncomplicated), this is about saving (and thus in some cases, resurrecting) the eyewitness through the act of preserving his (yes, almost always his) testimony. This mode of preservation inherently assumes that interviews provide something valuable to an as-yet unknown but anticipated future generation. The work belies the presumption that such future figures will need and want the artists' *own words* in order to write history.

Oliver and Blocker seek to address an extreme form of witnessing in trauma that feels so serious in its stakes that it potentially has no relationship to the interviews I discuss here. But their willingness to open up questions of testimony and the eyewitness—so deeply connected to any issues of an artist's "own words"—as related to accuracy and subject position is significant in that it acknowledges the power of words to make a reality, indeed to make history. As Blocker notes, any kind of witnessing may be traumatic in that "to be a witness means by definition to

[243] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

stand outside events, even those quotidian events we experience directly."[244] But such a witnessing position means that we collect quite a bit of information, and that our proximity to it—as well as the form in which we encounter it—is quite variable. Overcome by archive fever, it is perhaps common, or even typical, for one to feel left out, even nearly driven mad by the weight of the "stuff" that is left.

[244] Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony*, 37.

Section Three – Typical Questions, Assumed Audiences

Twenty-five years after he sat down with Warhol, *October* published an interview between Buchloh and Swiss contemporary artist Thomas Hirschhorn, whose works are dedicated to discussing current political and intellectual situations through a creative process and materials that value social engagement and access. In a moment of likely pure coincidence, Buchloh's first question in the printed interview is also one about Warhol and his influences, though this time in direct relationship to Hirschhorn's practice. Buchloh begins with what he calls "a typical art historian's question" by inquiring whether Andy Warhol or Joseph Beuys is more important to Hirschhorn, but also, it seems, to contemporary art more generally.[245] Buchloh's self-identification as a typical art historian who poses typical art historian questions triggers thoughts about what such a classification might mean pedagogically or disciplinarily: What does he mean by typical? Does a sense of what is typical create the questions, or create the art history itself?

Unlike the other interviews I examine in this chapter, the published version of this one begins with a caveat: an asterisk after the title "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn" indicates that the exchange was transcribed and translated by those other than its participants, namely Philipp Angermeyer and Russell Stockman respectively. This statement seems quite obvious, even harmless, but it is a reminder of the power of translation and transcription. There are otherwise no indications of transcription or translation in the text. I say this because the journal does note that the interview took place in person, but not who was speaking which

[245] Buchloh, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," 77.

language (though presumably it is Hirschhorn's words that come to English speakers—the implied "us" of the readership—through translation, evidenced in Hirschhorn's comment Buchloh at the interview's beginning: "Fine. *You* live in America."), who was in the room (likely a translator), and where the recording is or in what form (as it is unlikely Angermeyer was in the room with Buchloh and Hirschhorn, transcribing in real time as they spoke). The presence of so many to the interview itself, before it has even been published, marks an inherent inter-viewing of the interview's content, which has now been not only viewed but in fact touched by Hirschhorn, Buchloh, Angermeyer, Stockman, and their editors. My own inter-viewing of the medium reveals the significance of these figures at the intersection of one central element: transcription.

In fields other than art history, including educational research, literacy, and curriculum and instruction, there has been a recent push to account for transcription as a theory-laden methodology, rather than a straightforward approach to quantitative analysis. In a paper given in 1998 at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, psycholinguistics and language education researcher Judith C. Lapadat and early childhood and teacher education researcher Anne C. Lindsay presented their research on transcription, providing a thorough background on previous literature as well as present understandings. I see a treatment of this perspective—despite the fact that it is outside the discipline of art history as well as associated humanities fields—as integral to understanding artist interviews, since this type of work provides qualitative research about language that most art historians do not take up.

The basic premise of transcription as a theory-laden methodology is that "[e]ach researcher makes choices about *whether* and *what* to transcribe and *how* to represent it."[246] Significantly, Lapadat and Lindsay point out that even though transcription conventions have been specified or employed by various researchers, keys to these conventions are very rarely included in actual published reports, "as if these researchers assume that transcriptions are transparent, directly reflecting in text the 'hard reality' of an actual interaction as captured on audio- or videotape."[247]

Out of work done by Lapadat and Lindsay as well as information presented in their literature review, I take the following as a foundational assumption of my chapter:

> Transcription can never be complete or objective because the extent of detail that can he [sic] transcribed is both practically and theoretically limited. Transcription necessarily involves selection… This selectivity points to a difficulty in developing transcripts that can be used by different researchers for different purposes. The quantity of pragmatic information within which any stretch of discourse is embedded precludes exhaustiveness: therefore every transcript is purposively selective and these initial purposes constrain their subsequent uses.[248]

Of most significance here is the final conclusion, stating that the method of transcribing—inherently laden with the theories of the researcher—undoubtedly shapes any ability to read and use a transcription into the future.

Here, I am not making a call for developing some type of transcription practice that would be ever more precise, and thus ultimately objective. Both

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[246] Judith C. Lapadat and Anne C. Lindsay, "Examining Transcription: A Theory-Laden Methodology" (Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA, 1998), 4.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid., 8.

philosophers and researchers of the last 100 years have established pure or complete objectivity as unattainable, and particularly in art history, our subjectivity can be our best asset. It is my intention, however, to propose that art historians answer Lapadat and Lindsay's call that the "innumerable procedural and methodological decisions researchers make while transcribing reflect their theoretical assumptions and rhetorical purposes" by acknowledging the conducting and use of artist interviews to be a matter of historical ethics.[249] In other ways, the stakes of writing history are rooted in how material, such as transcribed interviews, is used as evidence.

Here, I also take quite a bit of instruction from Steiner Kvale, whose 1996 book *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* emphasizes that transcriptions are ultimately about the choices made by the researcher. Kvale insists, "Rather than aiming for completeness, which is not achievable, researchers should ask themselves, 'What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?'"[250] So, I ask, what is a useful transcription for my, or any art historical, research purposes? This question has two branches: (1) what is useful about artist interviews to art historical research? and (2) what types of information within a transcription are useful to art historical research? Purpose is at the center of these considerations, just as the choices of the researcher—rather than the words of the artist—are at the center of an interview. Asking such questions of ourselves

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[249] Ibid., 9.
[250] Ibid. See also: Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 166. Kvale updated this original writing in 2009 in a project with Svend Brinkmann entitled *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).

challenges us to "make reasoned decisions about what part transcription will play in the methodolog[ies]" we use in our writing of art history.[251] Derrida's vision of the supplement is perhaps the next philosophical step to a qualitative examination such as that performed by Lapadat and Lindsay, which demonstrated that when asked to transcribe texts, students "viewed transcription as a type of written language task" that allows for analysis of in-person exchange.[252] The exchanges transcribed by students were video recorded, but the study demonstrates that it is their transcription—rather than the recording of the event—that will be subject to further coding, analysis, and long-term documentation. In this way, the transcription was undertaken as an additional step in information gathering, but becomes the key methodological mode for analysis: adding only to replace, forgoing presence for measurable value.

This question of how to understand the role of transcription within a methodology is summarized by Lapadat and Lindsay as concerned with "the 'big questions' about the nature of reality and how to represent it, the relationships between talk and meaning, and the place of the researcher in this interpretive process."[253] Even if transcription and interviews have not been addressed in literature on art history, our discipline—and my dissertation—is certainly concerned with these "big questions:" the real, relationships of interpretation, and a historian's place in history. Yet, in numerous methods courses and texts, in years of research that includes both archival visits and discussions with artists, I have never

[251] Ibid., 12.
[252] Ibid., 16.
[253] Ibid., 17.

once been asked to consider what role a transcribed interview, either performed by myself or another, might play in my methodology. Even as I have read thoroughly and defended assertively the ideas of previous scholars within performance that the record is not the same as the event, interviews have maintained a "trustworthy" status, both as representative of the artist and fair on behalf of the interviewer. This is ultimately about relationships, as mentioned before: my relationship as an interviewer to the interviewee, the intended purpose of my research, the audience, and indeed the interview technology itself.[254] What Lapadat and Lindsay as well as Kvale wish to show through qualitative research, and which I wish to pull into interview practices within the humanities, is that these relationships are opaque and shifting, resulting in objects of study that are never exhaustive or neutral.

Language is up for grabs in interviews, then, as is the linguistic rhythm the printed interview works to conform and convey. In doing a close reading of Buchloh and Hirschhorn's exchange with these linguistic techniques in mind, we see that Hirschhorn begins his responses with affirmative language, such as "Absolutely," "Correct," or "Precisely" over 25 times across 57 exchanges. This could be a quirk of on-the-spot translation, in which interviewees respond positively at the beginning of answers as a way to confirm that they have indeed understood the translated question.[255] But presented solely in English, it reads as if Buchloh and Hirschhorn are resoundingly on the same page, with Buchloh's questions exactly appropriate to not only Hirschhorn's practice but also his intellectual and personal pursuits.

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[254] Ibid., 9.

[255] Kvale and Brinkmann discuss this in *InterViews* in their chapter on "Transcribing Interviews," which also draws research from a Pierre Bourdieu, Blake Poland, Elliot Mishler, and Walter Ong.

This is not to say that the interview does not have its moments of conflict, as when Buchloh pushes Hirschhorn to recognize that a division between high and low art exists as a social concept even if Hirschhorn does not himself recognize it.[256] To Hirschhorn's denial, Buchloh is definitive in his response: "We have not resolved the conflicts between mass culture and high culture. Not even Andy Warhol was able to do that."[257] The "we" here is floating, as it could certainly be the general population as well as the "we" of *October* (whose editors certainly have attained a status of their own "we" in the art world), or even the so-called "royal we" of Buchloh as interviewer and thus arbiter of the proceedings (in a moment of overlap between the testimony of the interview and the testimony of court proceedings). Nevertheless, Buchloh asserts a hierarchy here: Warhol is the finest example of attempting to collapse high and low art, and he did not succeed, and therefore we live in a society in which that division persists. This is what one might call a trope of contemporary art history, played out across thousands of art historical and pop culture examples of Warhol's fame and superiority. But there is also a kind-of pithy exchange between interviewer and interviewee, if paraphrased as: "If not even Andy can do it, certainly you can't Tom…Be realistic." While the pithy intent of such a sentiment is debatable, the takeaway is Buchloh's insistence on establishing Hirschhorn in a broader art historical context that has clear hierarchies not just of production but also of ways of knowing.

Ways of knowing are surely at stake in the exchange between Buchloh and Hirschhorn; take a later point in the interview when Buchloh compares Hirschhorn

[256] Buchloh, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," 88.
[257] Ibid.

to Richard Serra, as he—again—tries to establish artist networks throughout history. He imagines works by the two side-by-side in an exhibition and concludes, "one would recognize immediately that Serra's work requires a highly specialized, knowledgeable way of experiencing sculpture. It presumes an extremely differentiated phenomenological approach, one ultimately based on an aesthetic of autonomy."[258] Yet anyone who has moved among Serras, especially with children—to see them running, getting dizzy, and eliciting strange echoes from walls of cor-ten steel—can perceive their ability to cut across such erudite notions of specialization. This points to a larger question of audience, in which both Buchloh and Hirschhorn are invested in the ways in which a reader within the art world would perceive and understand their words. Thus, categories of common knowledge and specialization are complex here, in that something that may seem quite obvious—the appeal of Serra's works to a broad crowd—becomes specialized while other pieces of information—such as that contained with the footnotes of the interview—illustrate who Buchloh, Hirschhorn, and *October* might think of as members of their "common," or typical, audience.

I should pause here to do some clarification about what I mean when I refer to a footnote. In fields within the humanities, such as art history, footnotes (or sometimes endnotes, depending on chosen style and formatting) usually include two types of information: citation and annotation. Various scholars have examined the evolution of the footnote, though Anthony Grafton is the most notable. His 1997 book *The Footnote: A Curious History* provides a great deal of research and reflection

[258] Ibid., 94.

on the footnote as a phenomenon with early origins but whose present-day form is particular to the work of writing modern history, despite its lack of dedicated study (and thus, not only the content but also the methodology of his project is relevant to my own—artist biography has long been a factor in writing art history, but artist interviews are an under-considered contemporary phenomenon). His text provides a comprehensive taxonomy of the footnote that includes complicated histories as well as competing aims, though ultimately Grafton proposes the footnote as a necessity to writing in the modern world, in which historians "must examine all the sources relevant to the solution of a problem and construct a new narrative or argument from them."[259] In this scenario, the footnote is the thing that "proves that both tasks have been carried out."[260] This may seem quite obvious to a trained scholar, but Grafton expands this to recognize that it is impossible to ever have enough footnotes to definitively and completely prove something, so that now the footnote takes on other functions: "they convince the reader that the historian has done an acceptable amount of work, enough to lie within the tolerances of the field" and "they indicate the chief sources that the historian has actually used."[261] In this way, "footnotes confer authority on a writer," even—significantly—when they contain omissions or errors.[262]

Despite the convincing case Grafton makes for their importance, footnotes themselves rarely become the focus of either writing or revision. Presumably, to

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[259] Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 4.
[260] Ibid., 5.
[261] Ibid., 22.
[262] Ibid., 8.

most readers they offer valuable citations as well as information that may be interesting, relevant, or contextualizing but not fully necessary to the argument of the text. In this way, then, footnotes provide an opportunity to move backward not so much in chronological time but instead in intellectual time, documenting the path of research done by the writer, resulting in this most recent production that necessarily comes after all of that other work.

This concept of moving backward is why I believe it's important to think about what role footnotes play in interviews, beginning by pointing out that footnotes rarely appear in printed interviews themselves. I believe this is the case because, even among our varying conceptions of the methodologies of art history, interviews would fall under the category of primary source. By this I mean that interviews are understood to be documents that are original in their content, extemporaneous in their expression, and contemporary with their subject matter, and therefore do not require explicative citation or annotation. In a scholarly text, footnotes take us back along that winding path of intellectual production. With artist interviews, there is no further going back to be done: the words of the artist are primary in and of themselves. Thus, when Warhol offers the reader an "and stuff" or Hirschhorn affirms with an "Absolutely," it is the texture of their language—the conveyance of speech itself in print—that provides the appearance of something real being revealed and recorded. Again, then, truth does not come in the details (which, as I already discussed, Warhol gives us very few of anyway), but in the utterance. The power lies in their own words.

Thus, when footnotes are included in a printed interview, they layer on information and perspectives that likely draw a particular kind of attention from a reader. In Buchloh's interview of Hirschhorn—one of a handful of interviews that included any footnotes at all out of the many that I read over the course of this study—they list when and where a certain exhibition mentioned in the text was mounted or give the publication information of one of Hirschhorn's books. This informational, perhaps more accurately factual, type of footnote is most common in artist interviews. But "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn" also includes explicative footnotes. During a discussion of artists considered in Hirschhorn's altar works (one of several types of public sculpture projects included in his practice), the interview includes footnotes on those figures to whom the altars are dedicated: Otto Freundlich, Robert Walser, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Raymond Carver. The footnotes provide two or three lines of basic biographical information, including birth and death years, nationality, and—in the case of the first three—information about the tragic ends of their lives.[263] At first cursory glance (and indeed, footnotes often get exactly this kind of treatment), the content of these entries is straightforward and benign. This surface-level appearance is what actually illustrates the assumption about their typical-ness; they are like slide identifications, in that they are memorize-able pieces of information that include details (birth and death dates, ethnicity) commonly associated with knowledge about an individual.

In an art journal known for not just its rigorous scholarship but also the narrow interests of its readers, these footnotes contain only basic information; there

[263] Buchloh, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," 82.

hardly seems anything worth adding here. But in realizing that Piet Mondrian—who is mentioned in the same list as the above names—does not receive a footnote, readers begin to learn something. Indeed, the earlier mentions of Warhol and Beuys are not accompanied by footnotes with additional biographical information. In this way, the footnotes included in the interview do not simply offer the reader some historical context for Hirschhorn's choices of subject matter. They also reveal presumed knowledge of the assumed audience by indicating not so much who actually is, but rather who *should* be, known. A biographical footnote for Otto Freundlich assures any reader that it is acceptable not know much or even anything at all about this person. On the other hand, the reference to Warhol—not even by full name—in the very first sentence of the interview indicates that a reader should already know his biography as well as work, arriving to the text already with a sense of the larger art historical canon.

Since the reader of artist interviews is primarily the person engaged in writing art history, assumptions about audience are significant. Grafton touches on this, as he makes clear that footnotes have long been about the reader, not just in providing research information but also through employing various jokes, criticisms, or omissions. I take his view a step further to say that the way in which footnotes are composed and used is less about the actual, potential reader and more related to the interviewer's or editor's ideal reader. In the case of Buchloh and Hirschhorn, the ideal reader of this interview has a certain knowledge set from which to think and work, thereby excluding (and nearly immediately, as in the first line) those who might need more citation and annotation.

The presence of the reader from the very outset of the interview is not insignificant, and I believe we can expand Grafton's observations from footnotes to the questions and framing of an interview as a whole. In his insistence that footnotes both "buttress and undermine," Grafton makes clear that footnotes are necessarily of their historical moment.[264] What they really do is "locate the production of the work in question in time and space, emphasizing the limited horizons and opportunities of its author, rather than those of its reader."[265] Indeed, footnotes work with what is available and known in the moment; it is readers who will take footnotes, and texts more generally, into the future. Thus, I find it useful to think about the ways in which interviews speak to readers, including in footnotes, as if the readers are witnesses to history. An interviewer and interviewee are not enough, then, for the historicizing work of the interview; there must also be the reader—a third interlocutor—who brings a sense of responsibility to the testimony provided by the artist's own words.

Footnotes are often those things that practitioners of history-making learn instinctively or illustratively, rather than critically. Grafton gives us footing here in his observation, regarding the underpinnings of his entire project, that "Most students of historiography, for their part, have interested themselves in the explicit professions of their subjects, rather than their technical practices—*especially those that were tacitly, rather than explicitly, transmitted and employed*."[266] This is certainly a factor in art history, given what I have already discussed about

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[264] Grafton, *The Footnote*, 32.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid., 26. Emphasis added.

methodological texts and pedagogy. Certainly, it is not so revelatory to state that interviews reveal presumptions and assumptions not only held by the interviewer or interviewee, but also by editor(s) or reader(s). In the case of Buchloh and Hirschhorn, one can conveniently collapse those categories a bit, as Buchloh is both interviewer and editor here. For this reason, a reader of the interview can deduce that the included footnotes are not only representative of Buchloh's own assumptions, but also indicate the values of *October* as a publication as a whole. But beyond this seemingly obvious idea, we learn something about our practice—what art historians take to be common knowledge, or typical—from acknowledging that decisions around footnotes provide information about whom *we* as art historians make known and *how* we go about doing it. If there is no further going back than the artist's own words, the role of the reader in an artist interview is left lacking clarification.

To conclude, I want to examine Grafton's example of Pierre Bayle, who compiled a dictionary of errors and omissions of footnotes. In his drive to identify and define previous scholars' errors, Bayle asserted himself as an authority not through knowledge production but through knowledge classification. The sheer amount of data compiled is what set him apart as a scholar, rather than its interpretation. Value is placed, in this case, based on accumulation, not clarification. This relates back to my earlier assertion that interviews are always already understood to be "primary," not only as a source but also in the type of knowledge they share. The authority that added footnotes might confer is unnecessary for interviewers and interviewees who are established enough to be sought after in

those roles. As with the example here, someone like Buchloh does not need further authority conferred upon him, because people like Warhol and Hirschhorn agreeing to an interview with him provides the ultimate conferral, and this works in favor of both parties.

In this way, authority is not granted through the historical tracing provided by footnotes but rather the compiling of any first-hand information, such as that offered in interviews. This confluence of the interview with authority is what provides space for creation of massive interview archives, their power rooted in their extent of compilation, the many layers of witnessing that they draw together. The feeling here is that by capturing a lot of something—and acting just as Bayle did, by compiling without editing out "even what was distasteful"—we gain insight into the particular.[267] As Grafton says, "the compiler" offers the "critical reader as much truth as human effort could attain."[268] Merely collecting interviews—with no simultaneous or subsequent analysis in the form of footnotes or anything else—is then not only typical but also final, ultimately offering an authorized history that appears raw and available for use but is, in fact, always already edited.

[267] Ibid., 199.
[268] Ibid.

Section Four – In Her Own Words

In 1949, *Life* Magazine asked, "Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?" about Jackson Pollock (Figure 15). It seemed a worthy question at the time, and indeed, Pollock has already appeared in two separate stories in my own writing, both in reference performance, stories, and the myth of the artist. Pollock's exposure by Hans Namuth led art historians to label him the founding father of performance art as well, since the dance-like quality of his production both was and was not about the produced object.[269] As I pointed out, Kirk Varnedoe writes about him that his production and life is so full of stories that an art historian has enough primary source material for a lifetime of study. Rebecca Schneider points out, "Time and again we are told (in a reverberating echo from Alan Kaprow) that the American Action Artist Jackson Pollock was responsible for the supremely masculine act of liberating art from the canvas and setting the entire performance-based art of the latter of the twentieth century into motion. All other possibilities become as if relegated to a footnote."[270] As founder of both modern painting and performance art, Pollock in particular seems to warrant questions of greatness.

We already know Pollock's tragic story: the institutionalization, the drinking, the yelling, the periods of inactivity, all culminating in a horrific car wreck. But how do we know it? I ask because Pollock was, by all official and unofficial accounts, mostly a man of few words. One answer to this is gossip; in his book on gossip and gay male sexuality, Butt references Pollock's "(in)famous brawling at the Cedar

[269] Rebecca Schneider discusses this "patrilineage," as she calls it, in her essay "Solo, Solo, Solo." Her labeling of this history comes from many sources, including Paul Schimmel's *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (1998).
[270] Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," 36.

Tavern," without offering any further citation.[271] Pollock's reputation may have preceded him, but in fact, Pollock gave only a handful of interviews. After his death, his wife—also a successful painter—gave many more, with questions focused on Pollock's practice, life, and legacy. In the introduction to his book which brings together all of Pollock's interviews with many reviews of his work, begun with Kirk Varnedoe in tandem with the MoMA exhibition mentioned in the introduction, Pepe Karmel writes that it is not just Pollock's own interviews but Krasner's as well that "form the essential points of reference for all discussions of his working method."[272] This reliance on interviews reflects the shift in criticism about Pollock, which moves from intense interest in the man to great concern for process until eventually fundamentally changed by the revelation of drawings that Pollock had produced much earlier, in the late 1930s, while undergoing Jungian analysis.[273] Though the drawings did not provide the "Rosetta Stone for interpretation of Pollock's work," as Karmel notes that some critics hoped for, their presence situates Pollock as an artist who has undergone psychoanalysis, and thus a man who was (at least partially) healed by the therapeutic interview.

For contemporary art historians, it is likely that any of these words are often supplemented, if not entirely eclipsed, by the images of Pollock working in his studio, primarily those produced by Hans Namuth (Figure 16). In Catherine Soussloff's article on the relationship between Pollock and ritual—a connection that

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[271] Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, 3.
[272] Pepe Karmel, ed., *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 9.
[273] Karmel provides a summary of these critical shifts in his introduction to *Jackson Pollock*, 11–12.

drives the meaning of Pollock's paintings, according to her, despite other historians ignoring its presence—Soussloff addresses the production of Namuth's film in terms of Pollock's studio practice. According to Soussloff, "the irony for the critical viewer of the Namuth films of Pollock at work lies in the observation that the earlier black-and-white film is less filmic, mere footage—non-serious in a filmic sense—than the final color film. Yet, it gives more access to the trance state that the artist moves in, to the ritual aspects of his repetitive gestures."[274] This discussion of what type of documentation is more serious comes in part out of Soussloff's concern of J.L. Austin's exclusion of performance (i.e. language spoken in theatrical performance) as non-serious and therefore non-ritualistic.[275] But it reveals, unintentionally I believe, a view of documentation that Soussloff does not interrogate. The implication that the black-and-white footage is less staged, and therefore more indicative of Pollock's *actual* practice, rings strange in terms of an artist who so publicly lived his internal experience.

Of course, I am interested in Soussloff's almost offhanded assertion that that footage "speaks for itself"—what does this mean? It seems that she means that the color footage used in the final film requires such supplementary elements as voiceovers, interviews, music, and—more generally—context in order to make sense. The black-and-white footage, then, does not need these things to make meaning; it speaks for itself. We can see here how easily pictures and words become crossed. In terms of Pollock, however, Soussloff's idea that the images speak for

[274] Soussloff, "Jackson Pollock's Post-Ritual Performance: Memories Arrested in Space," 63.
[275] Ibid.

themselves becomes productively complicated in relationship to the image that haunts Pollock's career: his fateful car wreck on August 11, 1956 (Figure 17). In her book on Pollock's life and death, which brings together documents directly related to Pollock as well as other forms of historical evidence and artists' responses, Helen Harrison concludes that Pollock's legacy remains so open-ended because "[i]nstead of describing, explaining, or answering questions, his art invites speculation and encourages flights of fancy. You never know where a Pollock is going to take you."[276] There is certainly a romantic freedom here, but I believe we could similarly conjecture that the open-endedness is a product of Pollock's seeming disinterest in interviews paired with the accompanying presence (or more often absence) of the photograph of his car wreck, which is rarely reproduced in texts about Pollock even as the event marks such central aspects of his biography.

How did such an image change the words of Pollock, the greatest living artist, especially since his personal troubles rarely make an appearance in either his interviewers' questions or in his own responses? To answer this question, we can turn in part to Sarah Burns, who traces how a concept of "the artist" has been culturally constructed in her book *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, Burns is primarily concerned with the image of the artist at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, proposing that as the modern "publishing industry helped make reputations and establish canons," artists also

[276] Helen A. Harrison, ed., *Such Desperate Joy: Imagining Jackson Pollock* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2000), 4.

"learned to manipulate the media to their own advantage."[277] In this way, Burns presents the modern artist as "consumable," as much an object of consideration as any artwork itself.[278] I take a cue from her note that this was a very *public* and *published* affair: "Art writers had a great deal at stake, not only in the business of building and legitimizing their individual reputations for taste and judgment but also in the kind of culture their writings helped construct and support… Piecemeal or not, their authority was real, though never unchallenged, and nearly everyone in the ferociously competitive world of art was acutely aware of the power of publicity to make or deface an artist's image, reputation, and credibility."[279] Not much has changed since the early 20th century; as mentioned in my Introduction, the drive for artists to be recognized as legitimate (by both scholars and the market) continues to grow, and much of this power exchange happens in the public (web)pages of art criticism.

The importance of the construction of the "romantic (male) artist—the free, creative spirit of untrammeled imagination and unembarrassed ego" lies in placing emphasis on the artist's own unique output, which differentiates him from everyone else.[280] The same could be said of the critic, as well, who needs to distinguish a reputation within the multitude examples of art writing and production. How might artists do this with something other than the artist interview? Burns' book explores various approaches: newspaper articles, manifestos, organization missions, and—in

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[277] Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 2.
[278] Ibid., 5.
[279] Ibid., 14.
[280] Ibid., 44.

the famous case of James McNeill Whistler and John Ruskin—recorded testimony in the form of a lawsuit that was also fed by many public stances and run-ins with critics. Burns goes so far as to compare Whistler with Warhol, as "Whistler lay the germ of postmodern performance art" through "the point where artist and image became interdependent" and "the commodified self became a vital marketing tool."[281]

However, Burns ultimately concludes that the goal was merely to be in the public eye, one way or another. Her study focuses on how artists should *look* within the time period, rather than how they should *talk* or *sound*, much less *what they should say*. The latter is what is at stake in artist interviews. In her search for how exactly this was a modern problem, Burns inspires me to ask a similar question of my own material: Is the artist interview merely another manifestation of public consumption of the artist image, or does it matter what artists say, and to whom they say it? I argue that artist interviews are indeed another manifestation but a more complex one given that they combine previous platforms—newspaper articles, manifestos, missions, testimony—into one, becoming as much as about the interviewer as the interviewee. Our contemporary obsession with the artist interview may be best diagnosed in the realization that not even death can stop us from desiring, and producing, the artist in their own words. Indeed, death need not be the reason for an artist to no longer speak, as the absence of an artist not only casts value on their continued literary presence but also turns those around them into ghost whisperers.

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[281] Ibid., 245.

Most significantly, the photograph of Pollock's dead body next to his car did not silence his own words. Rather, Lee Krasner—an abstract expressionist painter as well as Pollock's wife—has been made to speak for her deceased husband, providing interviews to major publications and to mark exhibitions not of her own art production, but of Pollock's. In some cases, the titles of these interviews reveal their ultimate goals: they ask "Who Was Jackson Pollock?" or definitively offer "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock." In the case of the 1969 exhibition catalogue for *Jackson Pollock: Black and White*, Krasner is referred to as Lee Krasner Pollock, so there may be no confusion as to why an interview with her would be included in such a publication.[282] Most interviewers or publications mention Krasner as an artist in her own right, but very few of the questions are dedicated to her own practice or views. Rather, as Bruce Glaser notes in a 1967 interview originally broadcast over WBAI-FM New York and then revised and edited for *Arts Magazine*, "The possibility of a proper assessment of Miss Krasner's work…seems to have dissipated as she became closely associated with the powerful personality of Pollock."[283] Indeed, publications intending to historically situate Pollock, such as Pepe Karmel's anthology produced on the occasion of the 1998 Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, place Krasner's own words as necessary to his historicization. She occupies a privileged witnessing position, one that is linked to both intimate access as well as valuable perspective.

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[282] B.H. Friedman, "An Interview with Lee Krasner Pollock," in *Jackson Pollock: Black and White* (New York: Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, 1969), 7.
[283] Original citation: Bruce Glaser, "Jackson Pollock: An Interview with Lee Krasner," *Arts Magazine*, April 1967.

This is not just about insight into production and practice, but also about personhood. In a 1967 interview with Francine du Plessix and Cleve Gray for *Art in America*, Krasner declares (in response to a question that has been edited out): "There is so much stupid myth about Pollock, I can't stand it!"[284] Here, Krasner seems not made to speak but genuinely wanting to speak, both about and as her former husband, in order to dispel the myth that draws people to her perspective in the first place. Her refusal to comply with the "stupid myth" of Pollock competes with the stories that surround Pollock as male artist (as Kris and Kurz explain, all good [male] artists have myth), which Rebecca Schneider describes as a substitute "aura," after Walter Benjamin's insistence on the aura of the artwork.[285] Schneider explains, "When the aura of the discrete art object dissipated under the habits and pressures of indiscriminate reproduction, the aura was displaced onto the artist himself – a figure supposedly not given to duplication – i.e., there was only *one* Jackson Pollock, the biological man, and he was not subject to reproduction."[286] Yet Krasner does reproduce her husband, or at least her presence, if only primarily in words. Earlier in the interview, Krasner discusses Pollock's family life, punctuating one piece of information about his mother with "that's a fact."[287] In these exchanges, then, we see Krasner not just speak of her husband but also speak for him, clarifying and defending as she goes.

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[284] Karmel, *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*, 34. Original citation: Francine du Plessix and Cleve Gray, "Who Was Jackson Pollock?" *Art in America*, May-June 1967.
[285] Cite Benjamin Work of Art in Mechanical Repro
[286] Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," 33.
[287] Karmel, *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*, 31.

In Barbara Rose's interview with Krasner in 1980, published in the *Parisian Review*, Rose offers her readers a page-long preface about the significance of Pollock to the art world. In this, she writes, "As Jackson Pollock's paintings are slowly beginning to be understood as works of art belonging to a tradition of modernist painting, as opposed to scandalous personal acts that created the Pollock myth, *any information regarding Pollock's own intention and methods becomes critical* in defining the actual historical context within which the unprecedented masterpieces—the mural-sized, so-called 'drip' paintings he began in 1947—were created."[288] In these words, Rose reveals a particular ethics about the doing of art history: any information becomes critical, so thus art historians are obligated to seek everything out. She neglects to comment on *why* this information is so important or *in what way* it would or could be used; the emphasis (admittedly further emphasized by me) is that *any*thing could or should have meaning. She continues, "In the following interview with Pollock's widow, painter Lee Krasner, the circumstances leading up to Pollock's discovery of a new style that involved pouring diluted paint onto an unstretched piece of canvas on the floor, rather than applying paint to the conventional stretched painting on the easel or wall, are clarified."[289] As Krasner is now the one who will *clarify* Pollock's revolutionary painting method, we are set up as readers to understand Krasner as the authority of Pollock's process. And of course, because any and all information is critical to the doing of art history, Krasner is compelled to speak about these things because we—

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[288] Ibid., 39, italics mine. Original citation: Barbara Rose, "Jackson Pollock at Work: An Interview with Lee Krasner," *Parisian Review*, 1980.
[289] Ibid.

as art historians—must, even deserve, to know. But yet, the interview falls short of providing those certain necessary facts. When Rose asks if Pollock actually knew how significant the "drip" paintings were and would be while he was making them, Krasner curbs her ability to know absolutely: "I can only surmise that; I cannot quote him. I have a feeling that he was aware of their importance."[290] Ultimately, Krasner is made to speak for her husband, though she still cannot speak *as* him.

Krasner's authenticity as a speaker is fully predicated on Pollock's own absence; she would not be the authority if he were still alive to speak for himself. Indeed, absence—or loss—looms large over not only the theorization but also the most basic motivation around artist interviews. But how does death, whether untimely or expected, factor into the printed publication of the interviews themselves? When Selden Rodman interviewed Pollock for his 1957 edited volume *Conversations with Artists*, he provides insight into this question by making a fascinating rhetorical move, one that simultaneously historicizes and authenticates not just Pollock but Rodman's own work. He includes a footnote to the first sentence of his interview preface, stating the following: "This interview took place eight weeks before Pollock's tragic death in August 1956. I have not altered a word of it, believing that as it stands it would please him."[291] In the acknowledgement that Rodman has not altered a word of this interview, we as readers realize that surely that means that the other interviews are altered in some way (this is not an amazingly revelatory idea, but it is worthy of note). And as for speculating about

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[290] Ibid., 41.
[291] Nancy Jachec, *Jackson Pollock: Works, Writings and Interviews* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2011), 143. Original citation: Selden Rodman (ed.), *Conversation with Artists*. New York: Devin-Adair, 1957: 76-87.

Pollock's psychological state when seeing these words in print—forever captured as the artist's last reflections on his work and life—we might grow skeptical then of Rodman's ending. The interview concludes with the vision of Pollock leaning out his studio window in order to gaze at the pond on his property, while saying "Painting is my whole life…."[292] Here, the artist's words speak much more for themselves when paired with the interviewer's description of the scene as well as the printed publication's statement that Pollock was dead soon after. Throughout the publication of the interview, then, Rodman has asserted his authority in terms of what would "please" Pollock, making himself the interviewer who can offer the unedited and final version of the greatest living painter in the United States.

[292] Ibid., 152.

Section Five – What Is On the Other Side of the Tape?

Moira Roth's 1973 interview with Robert Smithson, published in *Artforum*, begins with an editor's note: "This interview was taped shortly before Robert Smithson's tragic death in an aircraft accident, before the artist had an opportunity to revise or edit his spontaneous views. However, the interview as it stands is characteristic of Smithson's independence of outlook."[293] As I am reading this ominous introduction, I cannot help wondering about this phrase: "as it stands." We use this in colloquial English to mean, "in the state such a thing is currently in" or "unchanged and unmodified," but it seems also to have a sort of strength. This interview will make a stand, is able to withstand the test of time, can stand on its own.

Despite public perception that published interviews are more aligned with journalistic practices of hard news, in which a source would not have editorial power, it is not uncommon for artist interviews to be reviewed by the artist before publication. In fact, particularly with the prominence of email communication, I would argue that many "interviews" not take place through typing to begin with, limiting the spontaneity of views that may be espoused.[294] In Roth's case, she attributes a significant alternative to the lack of editing. Somehow, leaving this interview "as it stands" tells a truth—presumably an even greater truth than self-editing does—about Smithson's practice and personality. Couched in Smithson's

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[293] Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 310. Original citation: Moira Roth, "Robert Smithson on Duchamp," *Artforum*, October 1973.

[294] I admit that this is an anecdotal impression, but every artist interview I have ever conducted has been at least partially through email, and I hear similar stories from many colleagues, artists and scholars alike.

untimely death, this interview is concerned with his "own words," which Roth seems to believe are valuable—and more valued—in their unedited, spontaneous state. Labeling them spontaneous implies an immediacy, or an essence, that is now no longer accessible given the artist's absence. These are the final utterances, untouched by another, pure in their expression, As if this interview is a literal last gasp.

Three of the artists discussed in this chapter—Warhol, Pollock, and Smithson—suffered untimely and unexpected deaths. Arguably, Warhol is the one least contextualized by his death, which came in 1987 following routine gallbladder surgery, but he is certainly still marked by it (there are myriad examples, but I am drawn to one from my college years, where Jeffrey Wright-as-Basquiat cries and screams in the street over the death of his friend David-Bowie-as-Warhol. Smithson's words had been published and recorded in interview archives well before his death at the age of 35, but the very shock of the plane crash serves to emphasize a psychological and social impulse that is at the very root of the archive: preservation in the fact of the unexpected. Pollock's gruesome and publicized death was followed by a similar interview situation to that of Smithson's, as I mentioned, in which Selden Rodman's 1957 book *Conversations with Artists* includes a footnote that states, "This interview took place eight weeks before Pollock's tragic death in August 1956. I have not altered a word of it, believing that as it stands it would please him."[295] Here, again, the interviewer insists on printing the interview "as it stands," emphasizing its unedited state and thus implicitly valuing Pollock's final

[295] Jachec, *Jackson Pollock: Works, Writings and Interviews*, 143. Original citation: Selden Rodman (ed.), *Conversation with Artists*. New York: Devin-Adair, 1957: 76-87.

words as somehow complete in their "his own"-ness. Rodman even goes so far as to say that this would please Pollock, a man who—as we know from gossip—was notoriously hard to please. These interviews, then, as either Pollock's or Smithson's last stand—against what, we're unsure.

In the case of Smithson, and unlike Pollock, words have made up much of the reality around his artistic practice. Smithson was a prolific writer, about his own work and that of others.[296] Indeed, his words provide the ability for his works, which were focused on pushing the boundaries of both art objects and museums, to be effectively canonized. Since much of his production is temporary, invisible, or difficult to see, it is his words that have staying power, and thus provide his art practice with a framework as well as ongoing historicization, which begins with Smithson himself. As discussed in Jack Flam's edited anthology of Smithson's writings, which includes not just the artist's many exhibition statements and articles but also a dozen interviews, Smithson not only paid careful attention to framing his work but also often revised or edited his words before they appeared in print.

Smithson's success while he was alive was significant, so it is not surprising that—a year before his death—he was interviewed so that he could be included in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institute. This interview was not prompted by new work or a new exhibition, but instead was driven only by preservation and posterity. In 1972 over the course of two days in July, Smithson sat with Paul Cummings, a curator as well as the director of the Archives of American

[296] Most of these writings are conveniently gathered in Jack Flam's 1996 *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, though even just leafing through issues of *Artforum* from the second half of the 1960s demonstrates Smithson's vast and significant presence as a writer during his own life.

Art oral history project from 1968 to 1978.[297] The Archives' Oral History Project was begun in 1958 with the following intention: "to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics, and others." It now houses papers and other material as well as the "largest collection of oral histories anywhere on the subject of art."

The Smithsonian's Archives of American Art—indeed the largest of its kind in the United States at approximately 3,000 interviews—can and should be positioned within the larger archival turn of the 20th century, as I discussed in my previous section, but it is also significant with the Smithsonian's ongoing efforts toward what they consider preserving and historicizing, which are continuously evolving. Currently, oral histories are collected under the auspices of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage as well as through the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of Natural History. The Institutional History Division even collects interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff as well as anyone else considered to have made a major contribution to the institution. In fitting with the institution's vision—"Shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world," according to the Smithsonian's website[298]—the institution has a long-term and overarching commitment to collecting oral histories, specifically to the ends of "shaping the future." The Archives of American Art are but one arm of this aim, making material the institutional resources put toward the recording of artists' own

[297] For further information on Cummings' career, see: Roberta Smith, "Paul Cummings, 64, Expert on Drawings And Prints of U.S.," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1997, sec. Arts.
[298] Accessible here: https://www.si.edu/About/Mission.

words. The archive itself has shifted focus in time in order to respond to current concerns, including focusing on regionalism, the experiences of women artists and artists of color, and those artists who are currently midcareer.[299]

Unlike Smithson's other interviews published in art magazines through the 1960s and '70s and subsequently reprinted in Flam's book, this interview is not driven by a certain topic (such as Duchamp, entropy, or the earth, all frequent conversation starters with Smithson), but instead is focused primarily on the biographical. Thus, it begins as we might imagine, with inquiries as to Smithson's birthplace and family structure as well as where he went to school, if he liked it at the time, and other questions along these lines. This linearly logical proceeding of questions that are intentionally historical reveals the purpose of the interview to be record keeping—or testimonial—rather than critical. Because of this, this chapter presents the most intentional example of recording an interview with the purpose of saving it to shape the future, and this is why I offer a close reading of it, as it is composed with a sense of self-awareness about the interview as a medium itself.

Most obvious in comparison with other Smithson interviews, Cummings' questions reveal an acute awareness of audience. More specifically, Cummings is setting up a dialogue that is not geared toward the New York art world. This is evidenced by his inquiries into Smithson's past, certainly, but even more so when he asks if Smithson has been back to Europe since working there in the mid-1960s. Smithson replies: "Yes, I have been back to Europe. I did *Broken Circle—Spiral Hill* in

[299] For a more comprehensive discussion of the history of the Archives of American Art, see: Smith, "Modern Art and Oral History in the United States: A Revolution Remembered," 600.

Holland in 1971. I consider it a major piece."[300] Here, a reader might think that Cummings has come to this interview unprepared. Surely, many in the art world would have known about Smithson's return to Europe as well, as *Broken Circle—Spiral Hill* is still regarded as one of Smithson's major works. But in this case, Cummings is specifically prompting Smithson to state the obvious for the benefit of future generations.

The second day of Cummings' interview with Smithson is much more focused on the artist's work over the artist's life, seeking to pin down Smithson's major intellectual and artistic concerns such as mapping, entropy, and speculation. Cummings is also interested in positioning Smithson within a broader view of the art world at this moment, revealing that even at this point, the land/earth artists were a countable group with one woman, Virginia Dwan, at the center. But in doing so, Cummings has a moment of checking himself as an interviewer, when he asks Smithson, "How did your association with the Dwan Gallery help you? Or was it a help?"[301] The first question presumes the relationship with Dwan was helpful and thereby valuable, while the second inquires as to its value. It is unlikely that an art historian familiar with Smithson's work would be unaware of Dwan's influence, and Smithson answers as such, but Cummings' self-correcting points to expectations of the medium: the interviewer will posit neutral questions, because the intention of the interview is to reveal information about the interviewee. Indeed, this presumption is so prolific that plenty of printed interviews omit the questions

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[300] Flam, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 284. Original citation: Paul Cummings, "Interview with Robert Smithson for the Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution," July 14 and 19, 1972.
[301] Ibid., 292.

altogether, as if artists' answers spring from unfiltered and un-infiltrated air. Yet here, this issue becomes even more complicated because of transcription. I took Cummings above question, "Or was it a help?", from Flam's publication of collected writings by and on Smithson. The transcript shared by the Archives of American Art states the question as, "Or wasn't it a help?"[302] The audio recording sounds to me as if Cummings is saying "wasn't." Thus, we arrive back again at the potential power of transcription; in this case, the shift is subtle (from implying existence to questioning influence) but when we are after the value of words—in their own, as they stand—nuances are critical.

Cummings has another moment that collides with the medium of the interview itself, and this one goes un-self-edited or otherwise. On the second day of recording, Cummings states, "I'm curious also, about your interest in religion and theology since it was mentioned in so many kinds of oblique ways on the other side of the tape."[303] Religion and theology are fairly typical topics of conversation for Smithson when it comes to his art practice. But this phrase—"the other side of the tape"—forces the reader to consider the ways in which this interview has moved across and between media. It is not just that this interview was recorded for the archives and then transcribed in order to be published elsewhere, but one may visualize where actual words fall, materially speaking. The words—Smithson's own words—can be found on the other side of the tape.

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[302] The Smithsonian's transcript of the interview is available for online access here: http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-robert-smithson-12013.
[303] Flam, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 285.

I said that this "forces the reader" to think on purpose; though the audio is available through the Archives of American Art (though not on physical tape), the printed interview has a much wider scope of circulation. It was housed in the Smithsonian upon production, published in full for the first time in 1979 in *The Writings of Robert Smithson* (edited by Nancy Holt), and published again in 1996 in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (edited by Jack Flam), and is now available online through the Smithsonian, with information from the interview included in articles and books about Smithson throughout the last 35 years. So when I say that such a phrase forces the reader to consider the ways in which this interview has moved across and between media, I mean to point to the idea that the tape is only an initial step in its circulation. Even now, I cannot literally go in search of the other side of the tape—the Smithsonian makes these records available only digitally, limiting plays of the tape in order to preserve the original technology. So not only must Smithson's words themselves be preserved along with his voice saying the words, but their method of recording must also now be preserved as well.

Similar to the experience of watching the film of *Cut Piece* as compared to reading the work's instructions or attending a live performance, there is a profound difference in experience as I move with this interview across mediums. Listening to Cummings and Smithson speak to each other takes me about three hours, though when I initially read the interview in Flam's book, it took only 30 minutes. That 30 minutes included the photographs that Flam adds, which show Smithson through time: as a young boy at the site of dinosaur tracks, at the Colosseum in Rome, with Holt in the loft that they shared. In each instance, I find my witnessing position

drastically altered, as I adjust my access to the information that already seems familiar or note that which challenges my knowledge. As I try to assess what is gained and what is lost in such exchanges, such transactions, my lists fluctuate and shift, finally revealing—through two columns that I have purposefully separated but are clearly connected—the complexity of such a question precisely because of the connections, or networks, created by these pieces of historical evidence.

The complexity is because interviews contain varying responses to a call and calls for response. In the example I have considered in this section, the initial call is made by the Smithsonian to preserve the literal and figurative voices of American artists, but the immediate substitution of the transcript for the tape makes the call for response—the action of witnessing—one of reading rather than listening. The other interviews I have considered here do not have such clear initial calls; rather, they are generated out of critical interest in contemporary practice. But their calls for response are similar. Their intentions are to not only show readers a moment in time with an artist, but also contribute to a cumulative view of who an artist is: he (yes, definitely always he) is the sum of his views and statements over time, delivered in his own words.

A tangible example of the layers of history that settle upon the artist's own words is included in David Getsy's 2015 book *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender*. Through considering abstract sculptural forms as both related to historical notions of the figure and critiquing conceptions of gender, Getsy produces an argument that overlaps with mine in his use of artist interviews as primary sources, providing necessary information about the practices of these now-

mythic artists, including Dan Flavin, Nancy Grossman, John Chamberlain, and David Smith. In doing so, Getsy uncovers a televised interview between David Smith and Frank O'Hara in which Smith remarks about his artworks, "Well, they're all girls, Frank…. I don't make boy sculptures."[304] Tracing Smith's words through art history, Getsy discovers their mis-use "as a self-evident and uncomplicated statement of intentionality," even given the artist's other—and many—words dedicated to the variability of abstraction and the idea that sculpture (even of the human body) could not be expressed through such clear categories.[305] Most significant to my examination, the artist's words became inextricably attached to his work and legacy precisely because of his untimely death in 1965, when they were "singled out for inclusion," as Getsy notes, in a special issue of *Art and America* dedicated to commemorating Smith.[306] From there, the words shape Smith's entire legacy through a critical compulsion to see and know the genders of his sculptures. What Getsy calls an "offhand jest" and a "bad joke" subsequently follows the artist everywhere, functioning as a false epitaph. Such a story begs the question of why such a phrase would be singled out from an entire interview, much less one that more broadly discusses the complications and complexities of gendered sculpture in the 1960s.

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[304] David J. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 43.
[305] Ibid. Getsy's examples include: Rosalind Krauss, *Terminal Iron Works: The Sculpture of David Smith* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 93; Candida Smith, *The Fields of David Smith* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 25; Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 176.
[306] Ibid. Original citation of Smith's words: *Art in America* 54, no. 1 (1966).

To speculate—as Roth does about Smithson, or Rodman does about Pollock—that the unaltered interview functions as a testament, or a monument, to the recently and unexpectedly deceased artist is an incredible case not just of privileging the artist, but also of privileged viewing. It reveals the arrogance behind the assumption that merely because one had (somewhat) final access to a no-longer-available artist, that there is some inherently pure truth in these (public) last words. But my examples here show that we are never without the "stuff" of art history, the layers of mediation and networks of witnessing that do not cloud truth but more importantly reveal it is never complete. The danger of the supplement, then, is in privileging these words beyond their scale or scope, so that the life and work of an artist—much less our art historical interpretations—may never escape from their cocoon. In the face of that danger, our responsibility is to treat an artist interview as a multi-modal historical source that is most valuable when we counter the familiar privileging of the "artist's own words," and think instead about how we get those words and why we want them in the first place.

Conclusion

In my discussion of Abigail Solomon-Godeau in the Introduction, I alluded to the idea that the project of exploring witnessing as a mode of doing art history might be inherently feminist, in that it requires not only recognizing but also valuing the complexities of selfhood and self-representation, an agenda laid out initially in first-wave feminism but fully taken up in critical race theory and queer studies. A feminist perspective would be in contrast to relying on historical evidence, such as documentary photographs and artist interviews, to offer us infallible origin stories: complete visions or versions of an artist or event, particularly in the cases where that "elusive totality" (as Gavin Butt calls it[307]) upholds the canon as we know it. In her essay "Solo, Solo, Solo," Schneider cautions her readers to be vigilant about the ways in which an obsession with the original or the authentic, and its valuing in the canon, continues to shape our imagination about the type of art history and criticism that we could produce. She asks,

> If originality is indeed a modernist masculinist myth, does the pressure on *criticism* to be original support that myth? Does our anxiety of influence engage in the same founding father patrionics that erects white male painters like Jackson Pollock as father of postmodern performance art? If I make Griselda Pollock's or Rosalind Krauss's claim my own (because we have to hear it again) would my claim to origin (by my signature) be in error? Or would challenging origin through error, engaging the familiar postmodern scam of, and thrall to, the copy, get something right in writing about postmodern art?[308]

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[307] Butt uses this term to describe the ways in which personal accounts or photographs may masquerade as complete descriptions of performance events. See: "Happenings in History, Or, the Epistemology of the Memoir."
[308] Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," 26.

As interviews become a form (or perhaps even a substitute) for criticism and photographs are treated as necessary truth-tellers, questions about the importance of originality become ever harder to answer. In my examination of historical evidence here, I chose examples that point at and play out the "patrionics" of the modernist myth while also making clear the potential for valuable "error" within the circulated and supplemental reproduction, in order to explore what we might get actually right about contemporary art history if we only stop looking so intensely for elements that confirm what we already think is right.

My treatment of performance photographs and artist interviews is ultimately guided by Margaret Olin's assertion about the ontology of evidence within witnessing: "as in any relationship in which photography has a part, one tends to demand either too much from a photograph, disparaging its lack of detail, or too little, rejecting its testimony altogether."[309] Olin's concern about either wanting too much or trusting too little illustrates an anxiety about the role of historical evidence in the writing of history more generally, an anxiety that is directly tied to having vast access without ethically debating what to privilege. Annette Kuhn plays out this anxiety, which can certainly become quite personal, in her essay "Remembrance: The Child I Never Was," in which Kuhn looks slowly and closely at a photograph of herself as a young girl, making note of her childhood pet, her thick wool skirt, and her hand-knitted jumper. Acknowledging that the photograph does tell her what was there (she *was* young once, and wore *that* dress, and sat on *that* chair), she also asserts that "[e]vidence of this sort, though, can conceal, even as it purports to

[309] Olin, *Touching Photographs*, 2012, 16.

reveal."[310] A simultaneous ability to conceal and reveal is what Kuhn identifies to be unique about photography, in that photographs reproduce a certain moment but also capture that moment in unpredictable ways. Their status as evidence is thus not about truth, but rather defined by the fact that they are "material for interpretation."[311] Thus, photographs simultaneously support and challenge our memory, or perhaps our memorization, precisely because their familiarity belies a need to "interview" them, so to speak. To make sense of them requires an inter-view, a perspective that is not only one's own but also attentive to those of others, where truth grows out of the connections, or networks, we can make between such views. To assess photographs (and similarly interviews) only with the tools with which we are already familiar, or to treat them as tools that we already fully understand, yields very little. As Kuhn notes, "You will get nowhere, for instance, by taking a magnifying glass to [a photograph] to get a closer look: you will see only patches of light and dark, an unreadable mesh of grains. The image yields nothing to that sort of scrutiny; it simply disappears."[312]

I admit that in intentionally focusing on photographs and interviews as historical evidence that need not privilege the artist, it is possible to lose sight of our object of study. But I assert that in losing sight, we are doing exactly what writing history about the present and recent past requires of us: to force ourselves to engage with the unfamiliar, to train ourselves in new patterns of knowledge-making, to question the ways in which we use historical evidence to perpetuate

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[310] Annette Kuhn, "Remembrance: The Child I Never Was," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 395.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.

interpretations or arguments that we may have outgrown. The "we" that I us here and throughout is meant to speak to art historians generally, and contemporary art historians more specifically. I write with "we" out of both generosity and hope, thinking of with Peter Schjedahl's "we" possibilities: "When a writer folds 'I' into 'you' to make 'we,' he or she projects a world of common values. Call it civil love. … The 'we' is make-believe. We—if you'll pardon the expression—do not inhabit a world of civil love. But guess what? We can pretend we do."[313] Perhaps some would read this statement and get no further than the admittance that such a "we" is make-believe, but—inspired by Carrie Lambert-Beatty's insistence in the make-believe as integral to creating new and more just worlds[314]—my "we" throughout is as critical as it is aspirational toward a contemporary art historical practice in which historical evidence can serve as more than confirmation.

To say that a photograph or an interview may be all we have of an artist or work ignores the many things we have ourselves created, thereby placing an undue amount of pressure on these types of historical evidence to show us what we think we need. Instead, we need to know that we are all these pieces of evidence have, and

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[313] Peter Schjeldahl first discussed this in a lecture given at the School of Visual Arts in New York on November 18, 2010. An essay version was subsequently published in *Frieze* magazine. See: Peter Schjeldahl, "Of Ourselves and of Our Origins: Subjects of Art," *Frieze*, no. 137 (March 2011). The full text is available online here: https://www.frieze.com/article/ourselves-and-our-origins-subjects-art.

[314] In her article "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," Carrie Lambert-Beatty coins the term parafiction to describe artworks (and thus, also, artists) that hinge on some form of deception. Lambert-Beatty's conclusion is that the value of parafictional work is in fact in valuing the trick, which requires a different type of response and responsibility of scholars, who must weigh what to reveal and conceal when writing about a work that is attempting to re-order or re-value the world through the parafictional. See: Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October*, no. 129 (Summer 2009): 51–84.

that our choices—about a single photograph among many, about an artist's final words—remain present long after the artist's body is absent. Our responsibility, then, is to continually see this evidence anew, and to value the unfamiliar within it. All of this historical evidence only has us. It is in our hands.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1:

James VanDerZee, *Family Portrait*, 1926

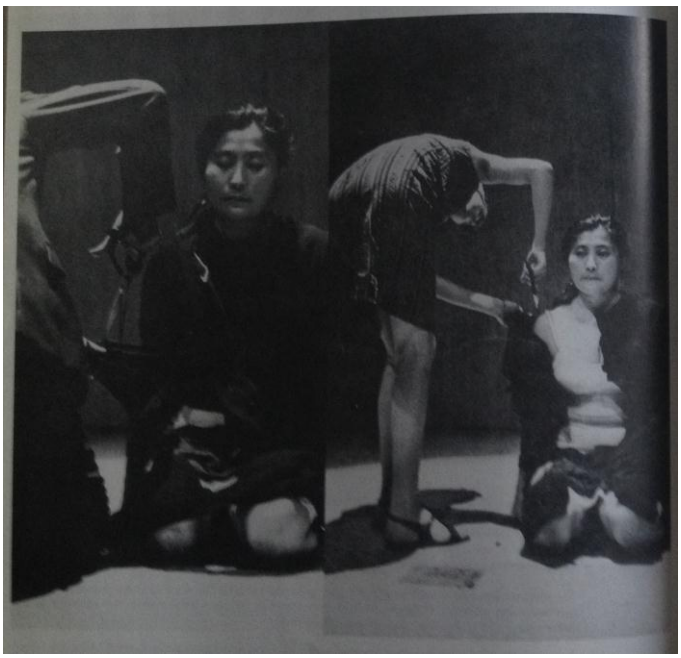
Figure 2:

Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1965. Photograph by Minoru Niizuma, taken at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York.

Figure 3:

Hippolyte Bayard, *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man*, 1840. Black and white reproduction of the original direct positif process.

Figure 4:



Detail of book page from *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects* by Barbara Haskell and John Hanhardt (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1991).

Figure 5:

Full book pages from *Yoko Ono: Arias and Objects* by Barbara Haskell and John Hanhardt (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1991).

Figure 6:

Yoko Ono, *Audience Piece*, 1962. Photographer unknown, taken at Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo.

Figure 7:

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #242*, 1991. From the *Civil War Series*. Black and white reproduction as printed in *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* by Rebecca Schneider (New York: Routledge, 2011).

Figure 8:

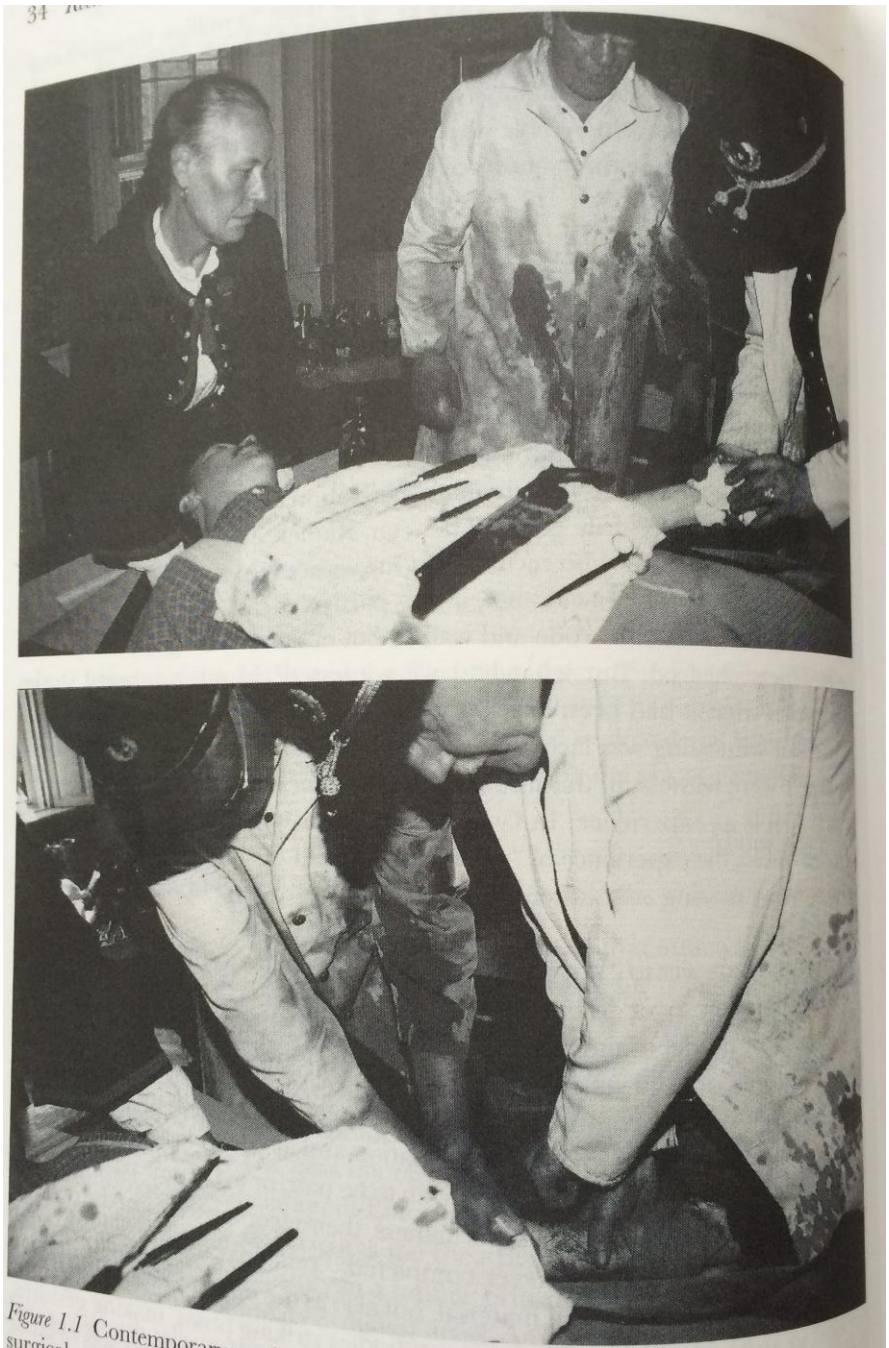


Figure 1.1 Contemporary professional doctors who are also reenactors, reenacting surgical procedures at the Civil War Reenactment Field Hospital at Hearthside Homestead, Lincoln, RI. Photos: Hearthside Homestead.

Full book page ("Contemporary professional doctors…") from *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* by Rebecca Schneider (New York: Routledge, 2011).

Figure 9:

Figure 1.3 Faux finger. Chase Farm Civil War reenactment, Lincoln, RI. June 4, 2005. Photo: Rebecca Schneider.

Detail of book page ("Faux finger") from *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* by Rebecca Schneider (New York: Routledge, 2011).

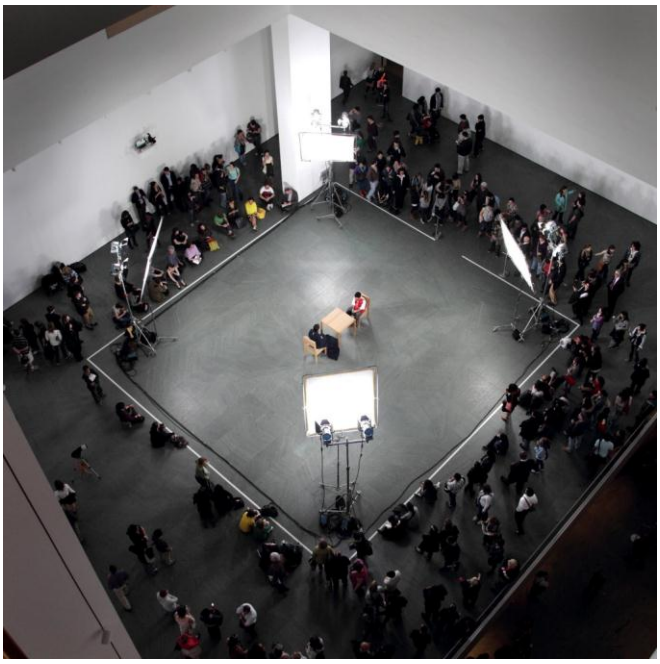
Figure 10:

Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 0*, 1974. Photographer unknown, taken at Studio Morra in Naples, Italy. Photograph compilation produced by the Marina Abramović Archives.

Figure 11:

Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 0*, 1974. Photographer unknown, taken at Studio Morra in Naples, Italy.

Figure 12:



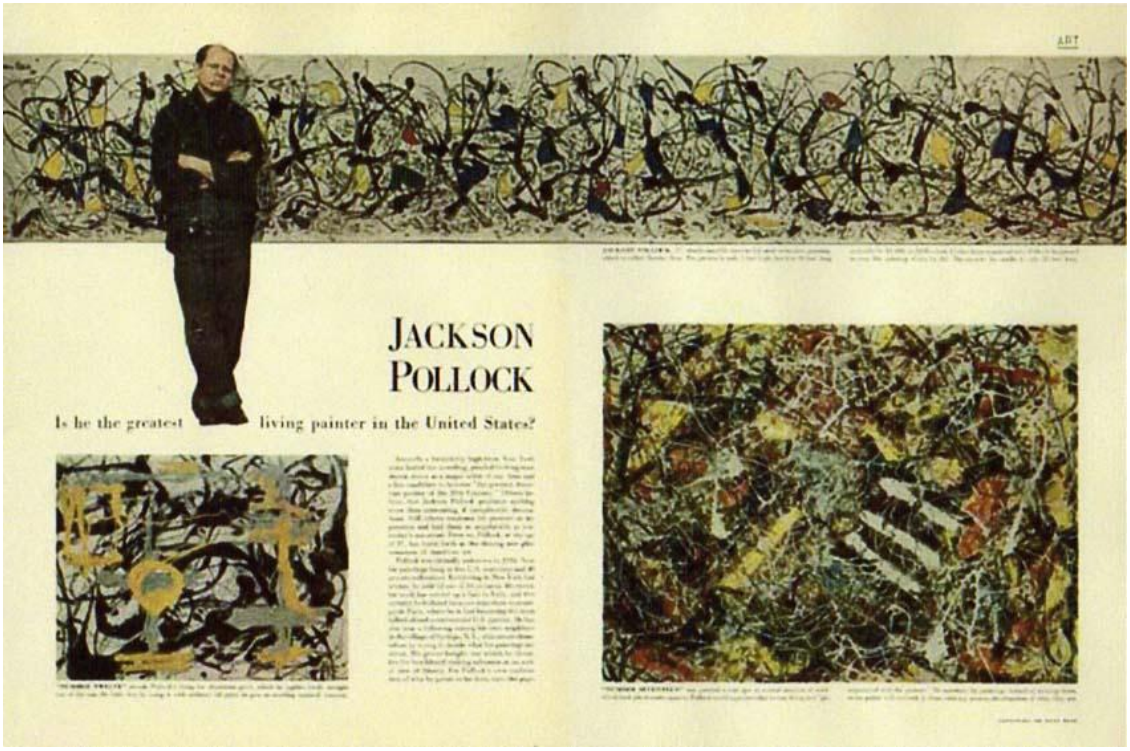
Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present*, 2010. Installation photograph by Marco Anelli, taken at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 13:

Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present*, 2010. Selection of audience portraits photographed by Marco Anelli and shared by the Museum of Modern Art through Flickr.
Figure 14:

Yoko Ono, *Clock Piece*, 1965. Photograph by Minoru Niizuma, taken at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York.

Figure 15:

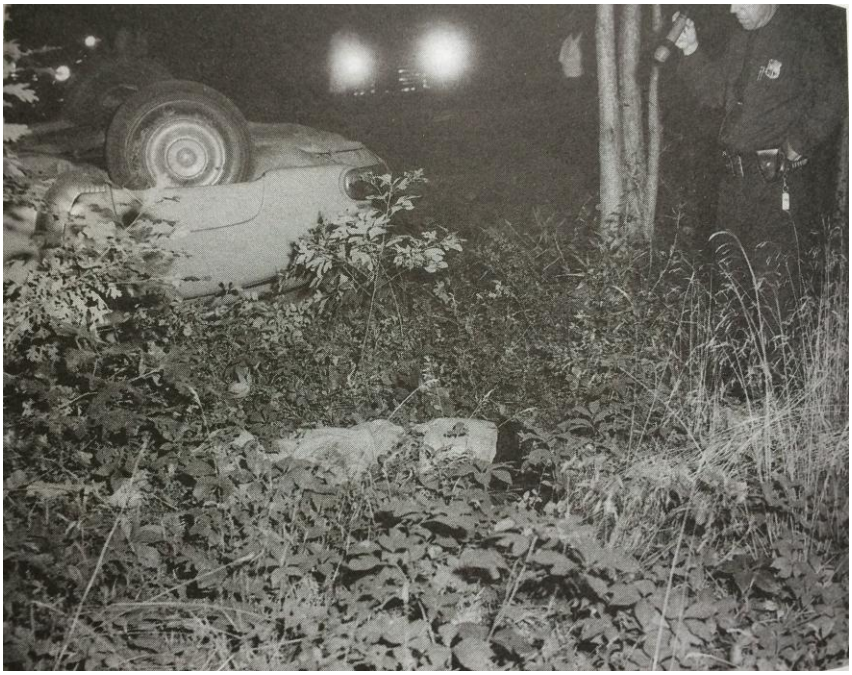


Spread from the Jackson Pollock article in *Life* Magazine, August 1949.

Figure 16:

Jackson Pollock in the act of painting as photographed by Hans Namuth, 1950.

Figure 17:



Jackson Pollock's body at the scene of his car accident on Fireplace Road in Springs, NY, on August 11, 1956. Photograph by Dave Edwardes.

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